

GUARDING
the
OUTPOSTS



J. GREGORY MANTLE D.D.



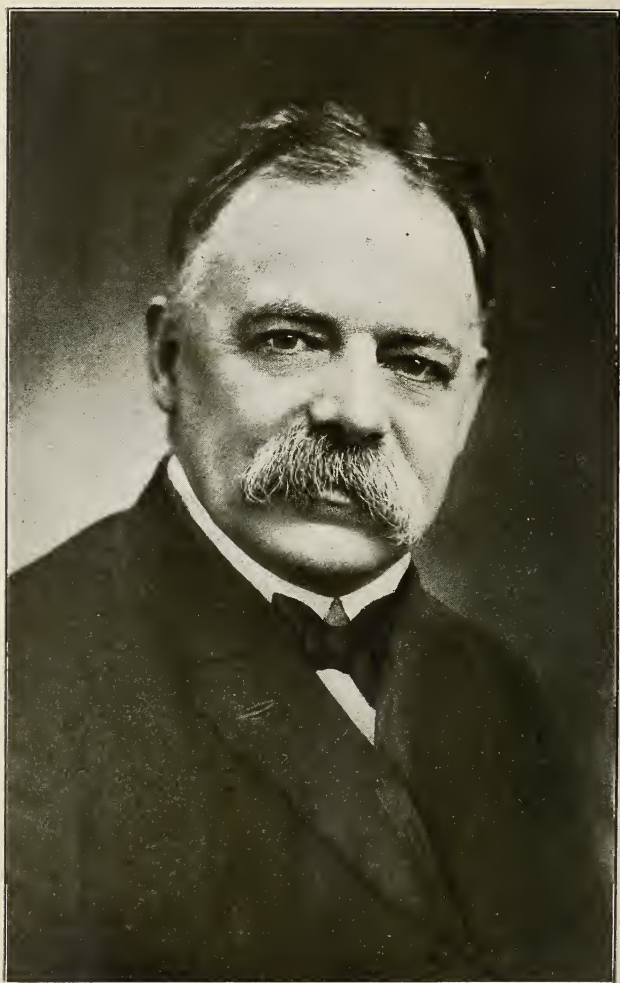
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GUARDING THE OUTPOSTS



J. GREGORY MANTLE, D.D.

GUARDING THE OUTPOSTS

A BOOK FOR YOUNG MEN

BY

J. GREGORY MANTLE, D.D.



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A FOREWORD

THESE chapters were all written for young men. They appeared a year ago in a volume called "Taps," which is now out of print. There were other chapters in that book which made it specially suitable for those who had been called to and were serving under the colours. Owing to the cessation of the war these chapters have now been omitted.

The reviewers treated these messages, in their original form, so generously that the author has no hesitation whatever in sending them forth under a modified title, feeling confident that their errand of usefulness was scarcely begun.

With a father's solicitude, I commend these chapters, full of wholesome instruction, of warning, and, I trust, of winsomeness, to the young man into whose hands they come.

Your physical energies are fresh and vigorous; your perceptive faculties are clear; your receptive faculties are strong. You can easily apprehend the truth and retain it. Plastic as the clay, you are sensitively susceptible to impressions. Your affections, tendril-like, are ready to fasten on worthy and noble objects. No legion of regrets oppresses and reproaches you. The chains of habit are not so strong that they cannot quickly be dissevered. Life, with all its glorious possibilities, lies before you. To enable you to translate those possibilities into actualities these pages were written.

Plutarch tells us that it was customary at the Spartan festivals to have three choirs corresponding to the three ages of man. The old men, with their grey locks and tremulous limbs, began by chanting: "Once in battle bold we shone." Then the men of middle age answered: "Try us, our vigour is not gone." Then the youths, full of fire and energy, concluded by singing: "The palm remains for us alone."

As it was then, so it is still. The palm of victory over self and sin, over the world, the flesh and the devil remains within your reach. It is for you to win the palm, and then wear the victor's crown.

J. G. M.

LOUISVILLE, KY.

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I

PLAYING THE FOOL

WHEN a fool is off his guard he frequently lets the cat out of the bag and reveals himself in his true character without intending it. King Saul had slept so heavily that when David and Abishai made their way to the trench where he slept, and took from his bolster his spear, which was stuck in the ground, and a cruse of water that was also lying there, they awoke neither the King nor any of his body-guard who were sleeping near him, and who were responsible for his safety. Putting the valley between them, David stood on the top of a hill afar off "a great space being between them: And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, 'Answerest thou not, Abner?' Then Abner answered and said, 'Who art thou that criest to the King?' David replied: 'You are a valiant man, why then do you not look after the safety of your King? Some one has been in the trench, and it would have been easy enough to have taken the King's life. You are worthy to die because you have kept so poor a guard upon the life of the Lord's anointed. Look where his spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster!'"

David no doubt exhibited them both from the top of the hill to the ashamed Abner, to whom no thanks were due that the King was not lying dead in the trench, for Abishai had proposed this to David, saying: "God hath delivered thine enemy into thine

hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him a second time." In other words, Abishai said, "He will not need a second stroke."

But David with beautiful self-restraint, hunted though he was by Saul "like a partridge on the mountains," refused, and said: "Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed to be guiltless? . . . As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish." Let us leave him alone. God will deal with him.

Saul was awakened by the voice of David crying out from the top of the opposite mountain. His senses were keen and acute, everything was clear to him and before he knew it he had confessed to David that he had "played the fool." The whole incident is recorded in the first Book of Samuel, chapter twenty-six.

The Book of Proverbs gives us a whole picture gallery of men who play the fool. The writers of the Divine Library, which we call the Bible, were plain-spoken men, and instead of speaking of a spade as "an instrument used for the purposes of agriculture," they called a spade a spade.

To play the fool in Scripture is never to act as an idiot or as a person mentally deficient. The word "fool" has various shades of meaning in the Hebrew, but the word most frequently translated "fool" means perverse, obstinate, incorrigible. Here is an example: "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him" (ch. 27:22). To "bray" with a pestle is to pound, or to beat small. The process of separating the husks from the corn by

the use of pestle and mortar is much more delicate and careful than threshing in the usual clumsy way resorted to in the East. Hence the idea is expressed that the most elaborate pains are wasted on the infatuated, incorrigible fool. "His foolishness will not depart from him"; it cannot be pounded or beaten out of him.

It is interesting to know that in Turkey this process of braying or pounding was actually resorted to. Great criminals were beaten to death in the huge mortars of iron in which the Turks usually pounded rice.

Think, then, of that self-conceited, self-confident and obstinate temper which eschews counsel; which persists in having its own way; which is so over-sanguine with fond expectations and baseless hopes, that it is sure everything will turn out according to its wish. These conceited, unteachable fools are the despair of the instructors in the camps, as they are of the professors in the schools of learning.

When I saw the words "Past Redemption Point" on a board of warning by the side of the Niagara River, I remembered a tragedy of years ago. Two young men went on the river one afternoon for a pleasure trip in a small row-boat. They had been drinking freely before they started, and they took a further supply of drink on board.

Quietly and swiftly they were carried towards the Falls. Presently a loud voice was heard from the bank: "Hi there! Do you know where you are going? You are only half a mile from the Falls!" The self-confident and muddled fools only met the warning with profane laughter. Another warning, a little later, was treated with equal derision.

All at once they awoke to the fact that their boat was being carried along with ever-quicken-

speed. They were alarmed, and began vigorously to ply their oars. But it was too late. They had reached Past Redemption Point. They were being drawn irresistibly over the Falls. Their cries for help were drowned in the thunder of the waters, and their bruised and mangled bodies were found, days afterwards, near the Whirlpool Rapids. What fools they were!

So the Bible says that the man who is unteachable, and self-opinionated, who declines the guidance of Reason, is playing the fool, because Reason is God's gift, and to slight it is to slight Him. He requires of us a readiness, nay an anxiety to be taught. The Scriptures are full of denunciations against the pride, self-sufficiency and unteachableness of man. To one who knows better than the rest of men, as the self-willed, self-satisfied, self-sufficient man thinks he does, any kind of instruction and advice must appear as an impertinence. Only let a young man come under the spell of this fatal sorcery, and not only are all aspirations after higher attainments at an end, but from that moment the movement of the character becomes infallibly retrograde. Nothing makes a man so unmanageable as self-conceit; and after loving counsels are given and refused; after solemn warnings are repeatedly disregarded and scorned, God leaves a man to himself, and gives him over to a reprobate mind.

It is this same word which is used in Proverbs 14:9, "Fools make a mock at sin." They are so unteachable, so obstinate and blind, that *sin* either in themselves or in others is little else than a comedy. It affords food for a pleasantry, and if not quite an occasion for a jest, it is something so insignificant and slight as to be extenuated, minimized and white-washed.

On one occasion Jesus linked blindness and folly together. He said, when addressing the Pharisees: "Ye fools and blind." The fool is blind to the lessons of experience; he refuses to profit by the beacon-lights, the "danger" signals that are found along life's pathway. It is all in vain that "Safety First" is ever put before his eyes. He is determined, as the Scotch would say, to "gang his own gait," and he has generally to pay pretty heavily for his folly. And there are few who pity him.

Refuse, I entreat you, to look at any pictures which offend against the moral proprieties and lower the moral sense, by making sin—and especially certain kinds of sin—the subject of open or covert jesting, the centre around which the amusement of the play gathers, the pivot on which the humour of the plot revolves. That is to make a mock at sin.

It is a notorious fact that the theatrical productions that succeed the best and find the most favour with the crowd are those that are interlarded with allusions to vice, the vice that fills the Divorce Courts and that quenches the happiness of thousands of domestic circles. That man is a fool who mocks at that kind of sin, for of all sins it is the most degrading and blinding, and entails the inevitable retribution of God on the persons of the transgressors.

An amusement may be quite harmless to you, and yet it may be purchased by the injury or even the irreparable ruin of those who provide it. No Christian can possibly enjoy a pleasure which brings spiritual or moral ruin to any of his fellow-creatures. If you frequent the theatre it is your duty to determine whether the entertainment is working for the injury of those who give it. You dare not—as you brother's keeper, as one who must one day stand at

the bar of God to give an account of the deeds done in the body—march over the fallen souls of your brethren and sisters for a few hours' amusement, and then say when that day of accounting arrives: "I did not know."

I have read of a company of settlers who were building a cabin for themselves in a South American forest. They had not dug deep enough, and they had not looked close enough, and in consequence began to run up their cabin just over a nest of rattlesnakes. For a time the reptiles kept quiet, neither axe nor hammer disturbed them. But when evening came and the fire was lighted, and the men proceeded to take their ease by the warmth of its ruddy glow, the hidden reptiles awoke, uncoiled their stiffened folds, and raised their evil heads through the gaps and crevices of the half-finished house.

Take care lest you build on a like foundation. Take care lest you provide yourself with like companions. If in your conversation "fast living," as it is called, is the subject of light, profane and dangerous allusion, and you laugh at that kind of sin which gives spice to your daily gossip, you are playing the fool, because you are making mock at sin.

There are young men both in colleges and camps whose speech is little short of a pestilence. "Their throat is an open sepulchre"—the figure is not mine but the Psalmist's. What does a sepulchre hold? Corruption and rottenness. When the slab is removed and the sepulchre is opened, an offensive poison is exhaled, and the atmosphere is polluted for yards around. There is the smell of that animal of evil-odour, called the skunk, about their talk. Again I say, when you listen to that kind of conversation and laugh at it, you may think yourself

“smart”; but the Bible calls you a fool, because you make a mock at sin.

Keep your mouth as with a bridle, or better still, offer the Psalmist’s prayer: “Set a watch, O Lord, before the door of my lips, that I offend not with my tongue.” In your leisure moments, when you are off guard, and the devil is consequently the most on the watch, in your recreation, in your walks, let no corrupt or profane communication proceed out of your mouth; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Never suffer that which is your distinguishing glory, that which lifts you above the animals—your power of speech, to be set on fire of hell, and so made to subserve the cruel purposes of the Destroyer of the souls of men. And be determined so to live that you will become an incarnate conscience, making putrid talk impossible in your presence.

In a most suggestive sermon, Dr. David Smith points out that the word “fool” in the fourteenth psalm,—“The fool hath said in his heart there is no God,”—is another word from the one we have been thinking about. He says: “The Hebrew word for ‘fool’ in this instance is very interesting and instructive; and it defines the Psalmist’s attitude and sheds a flood of light on the intention of the Psalm. It means properly ‘withered,’ being the word which occurs in the first Psalm where it is said of the godly man that he is ‘like a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also doth not wither.’ The fool here is one whose soul is withered, shrivelled and atrophied; and if you glance at the Psalm, you will see what it is that has wrought the mischief. It is not intellectual aberration, but moral depravity—the blight of uncleanness, the canker of corruption.”

And so the Psalm goes on: "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good. They are all gone aside; they are together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one." So that it is those very sins we have been thinking about, the sins about which there is more coarse and covert jesting than any other, that wither the soul. It is the man whose soul is shrivelled and burnt up by sin that says "there is no God." Atheism has always a moral cause.

Possibly there are those who will be reading these lines who are convicted of this sin, and whose longing desire is for forgiveness for the past, and for strength to live a pure, noble life for the future. Let me close with a story.

A gifted lawyer, named John Carr, became a judge in one of the courts of North Carolina. One day there came before him a criminal, charged with an offence, and convicted. The judge pronounced sentence upon him: "One hundred dollars, or jail for four weeks." Then the judge looked at the criminal and said: "John, do you know me?" "No," was the reply, "I do not know your honour." Then the judge said: "Don't you remember Johnnie Carr? We both had the same name, and used to go to school together in a certain village." "Oh," said the man, "is that you?" "Yes," said the judge, "I am John Carr, and I remember all the good times we had together when we were boys; and now here you are a criminal, and I am your judge.

"Now I am going to help you out," said the judge. "I will pay your fine and I want you to be determined to be an honest man from this time on." The judge then wrote a cheque for one hundred dollars, gave it to the clerk of the court, and said: "Let the prisoner go free." The man burst into

tears as he looked at the judge, and said: "Thank you, judge, I will do the best I can to be worthy of your goodness."

Jesus Christ has paid your debt to the uttermost farthing; and He will do for you what that kind-hearted judge could not do. He will give you a new heart; He will give you a distaste, a disrelish for sin, and a love for holiness. He will be your strength as well as your salvation. He will fight your battles for you. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and in Him you shall not only win the fight, but come off more than conqueror. He is the only one that can save you from playing the fool.

"He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean.
His blood avails for thee."

II

THE STORY OF THE SIRENS

PART 1

ULYSSES, the hero of Troy, had won a great victory over the goddess Circe; so one of those wonderful stories of the old Greeks tells us. Circe welcomed all wanderers to her palace, and set before them meat and drink. But in her viands she mixed enchantments, that could alter the shape of men. When her banqueters had eaten and drunken, she struck them with her wand, and forthwith they lost the shape of men, and were endued with the form of beasts. Her unsuspecting victims became, under her wicked enchantment, hairy swine. The comrades of Ulysses were the latest victims of her wiles, and Ulysses was sad.

Hermes, the giver of wealth, put Ulysses in possession of an antidote to the charms of the goddess, so that her enchantments failed. The great Greek warrior, the stormer of cities, came to the palace of Circe. She came forth to meet him; and prayed him to be seated at the banquet. He feasted on her viands and wine, and then the goddess stretched forth her wand, thinking to add Ulysses, the veteran navigator and leader, to her many victims: "Go now to thy sty, son of Laertes," she said, "and mingle among the swine thy companions."

But her enchantment failed; Ulysses remained himself. Drawing his sword he rushed upon the

enchantress and the palace echoed with her shrieks. "Who art *thou!*" she said; "how hast *thou* escaped my wiles. Never mortal man avoided them before; but *thou* hast *thy* wisdom from the gods."

"Disenchant my companions, O goddess!" said Ulysses, "else thy punishment is at hand; and thou shalt not be treacherous again."

Circe trembled and obeyed. She went forth into the court, and Ulysses followed her. With her wand she touched his companions, and spoke the mystic word; their shape came again, and they stood transformed from swine to men, before their mighty leader. Then was there great joy in their hearts.

PART 2

When Circe saw that her charms availed not to retain Ulysses in her palace, she spoke a word in his ear, a word of prudent counsel: "Avoid the Sirens," she said, "that dwell in the island of Pelorus. Their voice is sweet, but deadly; none ever listened to it and lived. He that tarries to hear that song, can never tear himself from it. He is rooted as a tree to the island, till he pines and dies of hunger. But since thou must needs pass their dwelling, I will show thee a refuge from destruction. Fill the ears of thy comrades with wax, and bid them lean on the oars. Thyself, if thou wilt it, listen to the song; but first be well bound to the mast."

"Spread the sails to the wind!" said Ulysses, "and let the ship bend her course to Ithara." Ithara was his home.

Presently night came down on the sea, and Ulysses told the story of the Sirens to his companions, and of the counsel of Circe. "And if," he said, "the melody beguiles me also, so that I make signs to you

to stay your speed, I charge you to disobey my words, and to bend more strongly to your oars. I myself am a mortal man; and may err like mortal men."

So saying he laid him down to sleep, and his comrades were stretched in the hold of the vessel. But when Aurora drove forth her chariot from the glorious gates of day, Ulysses sprang up from his hard couch. Calling his companions around him, he gave pure white wax to each with which they filled their ears. Then they bound Ulysses to the strong mast; fastened him with thongs and cables, lest he should yearn for the melody of the Sirens, and should cast himself into the sea. Having done this they addressed themselves to their daily labours.

Ulysses stood imprisoned at his own mast. When mid-day was bright in the sky, and the sun looked down fiercely on land and sea, Sicily arose, like a blue cloud from the horizon, lovely in the hazy distance. Capes and headlands jutted out upon the foaming sea, but chief among the thousand promontories was the giant height of Pelorus. Less than a league from its foot, an island lifted itself up from the deep. Thither, sped by a favouring gale, the vessel bent her way.

When he was as far from the beach as an archer, at three shots, might send a winged arrow, Ulysses caught a distant strain, sweet and luscious as honey. It stole into his mind,—it overpowered all his resolve,—he was captive to the melody of the Sirens. Louder and still louder came the strains of melody and evermore sweeter. It was not as the melody of earth, and every moment Ulysses listened, his love for his home in Ithara grew less. The voice of the Sirens came still lovelier and more enchanting over the waters. A long time he struggled with his

shame; at last the melody prevailed. The music of the Sirens had conquered Ulysses.

“Loose me! Loose me!” he cried. “Speed the vessel whither ye will; but let me abide with the Sirens!” He threatened, he wept, he sued, he entreated, he commanded. He cried out with tears and passionate imprecations to be loosed, but the oars of his men only moved the faster. Despite his signs, motions, gestures and promises of mountains of gold, if they would only set him free, the men only bound him the faster to the mast, and confined him by threefold thongs. The mind of Ulysses was torn within him; and it was agony to depart from the island. When they were at the nearest point he raged and tore at his bonds like an imprisoned lion. But onwards and still onwards the vessel went, and at last the enchanting notes of the Sirens died away and the zone of temptation was passed. Not, however, till the island had faded in the horizon did his comrades unbind his arms.

PART 3

The Argonauts, in pursuit of the Golden Fleece, came near this fatal island. The shores were strewn with the bones of the victims of the Sirens, for all who yielded to their enchantments perished. Jason, one of the noblest of the heroes, who was possessed of great comeliness and terrible manhood, was in command of this expedition.

As they neared the island all on board the vessel caught the songs of the Sirens. “Beware!” cried Medeia, “beware all heroes; these are rocks of the Sirens! You must pass close by them, for there is no other channel; but those who listen to that song are lost!”

Then Orpheus, the king of all the minstrels, spoke :
"Let them match their song against mine. I have charmed stones, and trees, and dragons, how much more the hearts of men!"

They could see the Sirens; three fair maidens sitting on the beach, beneath a red rock in the setting sun, among beds of crimson poppies and golden asphodel. Their silvery voices stole over the golden waters, and all things stayed and listened; the gulls sat in white lines along the rocks; on the beach great seals lay basking, and kept time with lazy heads; and shoals of silver fish came up to listen, and whispered as they broke the shining calm.

As the heroes listened, the oars fell from their hands, their heads drooped on their breasts, and they closed their heavy eyes. They dreamed, till all their toil seemed foolishness and they thought no more of their honour and renown. They were fast yielding to the enchantment, when Medeia cried: "Sing louder, Orpheus! sing a bolder strain! Wake up these hapless sluggards, or none of them will ever see the land of Hellas again."

Then Orpheus lifted his harp, and crashed his cunning hand across the strings; and his voice rose like a trumpet through the still evening air; into the air it rushed like thunder, till the rocks rang and the sea; and into the souls of the infatuated heroes it rushed like wine; till all hearts were thrilled and beat fast within their breasts.

So Orpheus sang, till his voice completely drowned that of the Sirens, and the heroes caught their oars again; and they cried: "We will be men like Perseus, and we will dare and suffer to the last. Sing thy song again, brave Orpheus, that we may forget the Sirens and their spell!" And he sang his song again.

And as Orpheus sang, the heroes dashed their oars into the sea, and kept time to his music; faster and faster they sped, and the Sirens' voices died behind them, in the hissing of the foam along their wake.

But Butes, who had leaped from the vessel before Orpheus drowned the song of the Sirens with his music, had reached the fatal island. "I come," he cried, "I come, fair maidens, to live and die here, listening to your song!"

They saw him kneel down before the Sirens. He cried, "Sing on! sing on!" But he could say no more, for a charmed sleep came over him, he forgot all heaven and earth, and never looked at that sad beach around him, all strewn as it was with the bones of men.

Then slowly rose up those three fair sisters, with a cruel smile upon their lips; and slowly they crept down toward him, like leopards who creep upon their prey; and their hands were like the talons of eagles as they stepped across the bones of their victims to enjoy their cruel feast. And Butes was added to their many victims.

PART 4

And now for the lessons of these stories which are found among the beautiful myths that cloud the dawn of Grecian history. I think it is more than likely you have been reading the lessons as you have been reading the stories.

The first lesson is that all kinds of intemperance, whether in eating, drinking, money-making, politics, or in any other direction, has a tendency to turn men into swine. And, as Dr. J. H. Jowett so strikingly says: "That men are *contented* to be as pigs in the mire, is the clearest evidence

that their crowns and dignities have been burnt away."

The second lesson is that negations and prohibitions are not sufficient. Ulysses longed to answer the enchanting voice of the Sirens. Had he not been bound he would have cast himself into the sea, and would have perished with their victims. His men were only saved by the white wax with which their ears were filled.

Not long ago, in a certain city in Indiana, a woman was talking to the prisoners behind the bars. She told them there were ten "don'ts" in the Bible, and, if they would only obey those "don'ts," when they got out of prison, they would never get in again. Confucius and Buddha could have given advice equally as good. It is not by negation that men are saved. There is a glorious positiveness about the Christian life. That is the teaching of the third lesson. "*Walk in the Spirit*, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

Welcome Jesus, the Divine Orpheus on board; and as He makes His heavenly music in your soul, the voices of the Sirens will lose their charm; you will have no ear for their enchantments, and the islands of temptation will be passed in safety. He waits for your call to take control; and to become not only Saviour, but King of your life. The part played by Ulysses was heroic, but Jason, by having Orpheus on board, acted a much wiser part, for the Orphean lyre is always better than the Ulyssean wax.

III

THE BEAST-LIFE

IT almost gives you a start to discover that in the Bible, man in his depravity and corruption, his sensuality and indifference to holy things, is compared unfavourably to no fewer than nineteen or twenty forms of animal life.

Here is the list, for which chapter and verse could be given in every case. The ass, the bear, the boar, the bullock, the dog, the fox, the jackal, the goat, the horse, the horseleech, the leopard, the lion, the mule, the ox, the serpent, the swine, the vulture, the viper and the wolf.

The whole round of the animal creation is explored to find types of the sins of which men are guilty: stupidity, violence, rage, obstinacy, ferocity, rapacity; bloodthirstiness and cruelty, malice and malignity, cunning and fraud, depredation and destruction, stubbornness and insensibility, wilfulness and waywardness, insatiate greed and selfishness, treachery and stealthiness, wrath and hate, insinuating flattery and subtlety, sensuality and beastliness, slander and venom, and every conceivable form of wickedness.

That is a catalogue that makes one shudder. "The natural man," says Dr. W. L. Watkinson, "is a menagerie. The scientist stands by us in saying that. He tells us that man's heart is a dark forest, where wild beasts roam, and where they hiss and snarl, scream and bite. He says they came out of

those primeval forests in your ancestral days and are the survival of the animality of your origin. We won't quarrel with him about that. But the wild beasts are there, the ape, the cockatrice, the wolf and the leopard—all the wild passions are there—and Jesus Christ is the tamer of these wild passions."

Long centuries ago Plato depicted the soul under the figure of a many-headed monster, a lion, and a man combined in one form. The man representing the higher nature, the reason; the lion representing the passionate element; and the many-headed monster representing the lusts and appetites."

Some will remember Tennyson's description of the isle of Britain "till Arthur came."

"There grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
 . . . Then he drave
The heathen; after, slew the beast, and felled
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight,
And so returned."

Which picture is an allegory. "Wherein the beast was ever more and more, but man was less and less."—Is that a picture of your life? If you are sorrowfully obliged to confess it is, this chapter is written to tell you that you need not despair—God will forgive you all but your despair—for by welcoming the Divine King Arthur as your Deliverer, and by crowning Him as your King, you will find to your exceeding joy, that He will slay the beast, and drive out the foes that have vanquished you and spoiled your life. He will restore all the waste places of the soul, letting in the sun; and out of wild confusion He will bring forth settled peace and ordered beauty.

A man came to one of the best known preachers in this land and said: "Again and again the passion of my flesh rises up and faces me, even in the midst of my work. Sometimes I have to get up at night and walk for hours to fight this beast, this animal, this flesh." But he said, "Slowly I am getting the mastery, and Christ is being crowned in my life." The man who made that confession had the leadership of over two thousand students, and one of those students said: "That man can do anything he wants to do in this University." It was a desperate fight with the beast-life.

I can imagine some one saying, "That is what I have tried to do scores of times, but the beast has obtained the mastery over me, and I have gone down in the conflict." Not for a moment would I suggest that the strongest determination on your part not to be mastered is unnecessary, but I would strongly emphasize the glorious fact that your beast-life, in all its hateful manifestations, was taken by Jesus Christ to the Cross of Calvary, so that, in identification with Him, you may be absolutely victorious over it. His victory was for you. His overcomings are all reckoned to your account, if, by intelligent faith, you *will* that it should be so.

I like to think of myself as lying in His arms when He hung for my transgressions on the rugged Cross. I think of myself as dying with Him. I lie there still, and am carried with Him to the rocky sepulchre, being buried with Him; for burial is the seal and certificate of death. Still in His loving arms I lie, and come forth with Him from the tomb in resurrection victory, to walk henceforth in "newness of life." My beast-life is dead in the reckoning of God. It died in Christ's death to sin. It shall be dead in my reckoning too. That is a reckon-

ing that always comes out right, and it is a reckoning God cannot fail to honour, because He commands it: "Likewise—once for all—reckon yourself to be dead indeed unto sin and alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Ponder the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans if you would know still more about the wondrous secret.

Satan loves to get us to fight against the beast in our own strength, just as if no victory had ever been won for us. He knows the beast will master us, unless we call in the Victor of Calvary. The wail of the man who is fighting the beast is: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me" from this beast-life? The shout of the man who has seen that the victory was won for him on Calvary, is: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me." "Thanks be to God who always leadeth me in triumph in Jesus Christ."

Dr. J. H. Jowett once told his congregation in New York the following remarkable story: Late one evening there came to him his dearest friend, as he now is. He was filled with spiritual misery and unrest. They talked about the deepest things until far on into the night. On going home this friend flung himself into the chair by his study fire, and he said: "Lord, wilt Thou reveal to me what there is amiss." And then he says: "As clear as anything I ever saw in this world, I saw a range of mountains, snow-clad mountains of tremendous height, shining in the light of God."

He went to bed, and in the night this vision was continued in a dream. In his dream he went down into the valley, and when he got to the very bottom, he found himself surrounded, to his horror, with all manner of loathsome things; savage beasts were

there, showing their teeth, and glowering upon him.

He looked at them and then he saw that they were incarnations of his own past sins. He recognized them, that one and this one and the other; his impurity, his deceitfulness, his pride, his passion. And he said: "I was so ashamed!" And then he heard a footfall. "Instinctively I knew it was Jesus. He came nearer and nearer, and I was so consumed with shame, that I took a kind of cloak I was wearing and I threw it over my head.

"The footfalls came nearer and nearer, until at last they stopped beside me. I knew it was my Lord, and I was too ashamed to look up. After what seemed to me a long time, I threw back my cloak and looked, and lo! all the unclean beasts had fastened themselves upon Him." Then he awoke, and lo! the burden of his sin was gone.

"My sin, O the bliss of that glorious thought,
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to His Cross, and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul."

One of the most instructive of the fairy tales we learned in our childhood, is that of Beauty and the Beast. You remember how the merchant was to be put to death, for plucking the bunch of roses in the garden of the Beast, and how his youngest and fairest daughter, whom he loved the most, offered to take his place and suffer his doom.

When Beauty first saw the frightful form of the Beast, she was dreadfully afraid, and shrank from him; but by and by, as she got to know him better, she began to feel pity for him, and was touched with his gentleness and kindness.

At last she agreed to marry him; and then a wonderful thing happened. Instead of the ugly

Beast, she saw a graceful and handsome young Prince, who thanked her with tenderest expressions for having delivered him from the wicked enchantment that had transformed him into a beast.

The moral of this familiar story, which is as old as the hills, is that it is the pure, disinterested, unfathomable love of Jesus, who consented to take upon Him our nature, and die in our room and stead, and who unites Himself to every surrendered and believing soul in an everlasting union, that takes away all the marks of the beast nature, and transforms us into His own lovely likeness. Instead of the beast-life we become partakers of the Christ-life. Slightly altering Paul's words in the seventh of Romans we may say: "We are become dead to the beast by the body, or death of Christ; that we should be married to Him who is raised from the dead, and so bring forth fruit unto God."

The legend runs that there once stood in an old, baronial castle a musical instrument upon which no one could play. It was very complicated in its mechanism, and during years of disuse the dust had gathered and clogged it, while dampness and variations of temperature had robbed the strings of their tone. Various experts had tried to repair it, but without success, and so when the hand of a player swept over the chords it awoke only discordant and unlovely sounds.

But there came one day to the castle a man of another sort. He was the maker of the instrument and saw what was amiss, and what was needed for its repair. With loving care and skill he freed the wires from the encumbering dust and adjusted those that were awry, and brought the jangling strings into tune, and presently the hall rang with bursts of exquisite music.

It is so with these souls of ours, so disordered by sin that everything is in confusion and at cross-purposes. It is not until the Divine Maker comes and begins the task of repair and readjustment that our threefold nature can be set right and made capable of the harmonies for which it was originally constructed.

He alone can remove the encumbering dust, and bring melody and harmony out of what has been so discordant and inharmonious. He can make your life one long Hallelujah Chorus. Will you not allow Him to work this miracle in your nature?

O God, take the reins of my life!
I have driven it blindly to left and to right,
In mock of the rock, in the chasm's despite,
Where the brambles were rife
In the blaze of the sun and deadliest black of the night,
O God, take the reins of my life.

For I am so weary and weak,
My hands are a-quiver, and so is my heart,
And my eyes are too tired for the tear-drops to start,
And the worn horses reek
With the anguishing pull and the hot, heavy harness' smart,
While I am all weary and weak.

Now, Lord, without tarrying, *now!*
While eyes can look up, and while reason remains;
And my hand yet has strength to surrender the reins;
Ere death stamp my brow
And pour coldness and stillness thro' all the mad course of
my veins;
Come, Lord, without tarrying, *now!*

I yield Thee my place, which is Thine,
Appoint me to lie on the chariot floor;
Yea, appoint me to lie at Thy feet, and no more;
While the glad axles shine,
And the happy wheels run on their course to the heavenly
door;
Now Thou hast my place which is Thine!

—AMOS RUSSELL WELLS.

IV

THE RUIN OF A HERO

THE story of Samson is told, as all the Bible stories are told, without any sort of extenuation or concealment. The Word of God paints its heroes as they really are; in their strength and in their weakness; in their faith and in their failure; in their right-doing and in their wrongdoing. When Oliver Cromwell sat for his portrait, the artist proposed that he cover a disfiguring wart, on one of his cheeks, by resting his head on his hand. The blunt Protector said gruffly: "No; paint me as I am; warts and all." That is just how the Bible paints its pictures.

Samson's portrait is a full-length one. It is drawn from his birth to his death. It stands like a beacon-light on a rock-bound coast; or like the red light that arrests the express train, and says: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The story is told in four chapters.

CHAPTER THE FIRST

The story of Samson's birth is as beautiful and as tender as a summer's morning. What more could God have done for him than He did? From his birth, and indeed long before it, the gifts of God were showered upon him. Could any child have come into the world under happier circumstances? We see his father and mother resolving that they will

not take God's gift apart from God's purposes. They will not plan their boy's life to please themselves. He must of course be the arbiter of his own destiny, but they determine they will do all they can to guide him into the destiny God has prepared for him.

A deliverer was badly needed in Israel, for this was one of the darkest hours in the nation's history. The Ammonites, the Midianites and the Moabites had all conquered them in turn, and now the Philistines were their oppressors. Here is an ominous verse recorded in the same chapter that tells of Samson's birth: "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines *forty years*" (Judges 13:1). As in the days of Saul and Jonathan, all the weapons of war were taken from the Hebrews, and if a man wanted to sharpen his ploughshare he had to take it to a Philistine forge (see I. Sam. 13:19-22). Well might Samson's parents hope that they had given to Israel the deliverer who was so greatly needed.

Samson was a Nazarite. The word simply means separated or set apart. A Nazarite was forbidden the fruit of the vine in every form (see Num. 6:1-8). That prohibition was simply intended to teach the Nazarite that one who was separated to God must not become intoxicated with the world's draughts of pleasure. It was the Old Testament putting of the Apostle Paul's admonition: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."

A Nazarite must not allow a razor to come on his head. His flowing locks openly announced his separated state. Those unshorn locks revealed the fact that he was not his own.

A Nazarite was forbidden to touch the dead. He must be found among the living, not among the dead. All human relationships had to be subordinate to higher claims (see Luke 14:26-33). So Samson grows up, separated to God, and known by his very appearance to be so separated.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

We see Samson now as a young man in the Camp of Dan (Judges 13:25). This was the place where the men of his tribe were wont to assemble for such military training as was possible without weapons of war. This was where the older men held council concerning their deplorable condition, and discussed the possibilities of deliverance from their cruel oppressors. Around the camp-fires Samson heard the wondrous stories of the brave days of old. The story of Gideon, his dream, his barley cakes, his brave three hundred, his pitchers and torches, would become as familiar to him as it is to us. How these stories of heroism must have moved his heart! So we read: "The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the Camp of Dan."

Will there not be some such gracious visitations of the Holy Spirit upon the Soldiers of the National Army in the camps where they are now assembled for training? We have no doubt there will. Many will look back upon the camp as a sacred spot, for there they received, under some inspiring message, in some quiet hour of meditation, or perchance, as they perused a letter full of loving solicitude from father or mother, a clear call to a clean, noble and devoted life.

Many have had such hours. Their eyes have been opened. In God's eternal whiteness they have seen

their own blackness and corruption; things have been appraised at their proper value; and a scorn for the world, with its gilded toys, has taken possession of the soul. They have cried out:

“I have done at length with trifling;
Henceforth, O thou soul of mine,
Thou must take up sword and gauntlet
Waging warfare most Divine!”

If no such moving of the Spirit has come to you, pray that you may not be any longer fooled by the devil; and that your eyes may not be so blinded as not to see of how much greater worth are the things that endure, compared with those that are but for a moment.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

Now we see Samson in the city of Gaza. Gaza was a big commercial city, the chief seaport of the Philistines. It was like all such seaports a gay, wicked, pleasure-loving place, contrasting strikingly with the quiet of Dan, and its monotonous and uneventful home life.

Gaza lay very near the Camp of Dan. It always does. There is no escaping it. It is at Gaza that your Nazariteship will be put to the test. It is at Gaza that tens of thousands of soldiers, who might have been heroes, have been ruined physically, morally and spiritually. Across the hospital doors, where hundreds of boys lie to-day, the victims of their own folly, you might write in letters of fire:

RUINED IN GAZA.

It is the same shameful story: “Then went Samson to Gaza and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her” (ch. 16:1). You find the duplicate of it

in the beginning of the Book. Our first parents gaze eagerly at the forbidden fruit. That fruit has an intoxicating fascination. It exercises over them its fatal spell. To the wandering eyes and heart its sweetness is positively maddening. The serpent injects his venom into their minds. The restraining bands of conscience are fused, and drop away. The fires of passion flash and flame uncontrolled. The jewel of innocence is flung away. The sin is sinned, and at that very moment the glamour of the indulged passion is disenchanted, and the deluded and ensnared victim knows that he has eaten death, and that life can never be the same again:

“Alas! how easily things go wrong!
A word too much, or a glance too long,
And there cometh a mist and a weeping rain
And life is never the same again.”

My brother, you will be tempted as you go down to Gaza. The evil of impurity will confront you there as it did Samson. There can be no half measures. To dally is often to be damned. To parley is to become a prey to the demon of lust; hesitation to many has been hell. Tens of thousands of bright, promising lives have been ruined at Gaza. Samson's story is written for your warning. Impurity is the only sin that you cannot grapple with; you have to run away from it. When Lowell said: “My life shall be a challenge not a truce,” he did not mean that a man should mount a war-horse, and go searching for evil that he might combat it. He meant that his life should be a challenge to impurity, not a truce with it. If you laugh at the indecent story; if you read the immoral book; if your familiars are unclean men, your life is a truce with this damning sin and not a challenge to it; and

this searing, destructive sin of young manhood will soon reckon you among its victims.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

Samson has fallen. Delilah has wormed the secret out of him. "Tell me," she says, "what is the secret of your strength? What makes the difference between you and other people? What prevents you from coming and joining us?"

Then her unholy hands are laid upon Samson's holy secret for an unholy purpose, and the hero of Israel is ruined. He gave himself away to a harlot. He thought, as thousands of young men have thought, that he could easily escape from the meshes of the snare which the devil was weaving about him. He thought that he, the Nazarite, could touch pitch and not be defiled; he could play with fire and not be burned! others might be hopelessly ensnared, not so with him. That is Delilah's way. She gives her victims a long chain, certain that they will come back, even though they know her house is the way to hell. One day they find the chain has tightened upon them, and they have to stay where they are. The ruin is complete.

"Now I will retrieve!" says Samson: "Now I will go out as at other times before, but he wist not that the Lord had departed from him." He had gone too far. He had sinned once too often. God is very patient and longsuffering, but you may overstep the bounds of His forbearance, for sin must be punished or He would cease to be God. If you sow wild oats you cannot expect to reap tame wheat.

Samson is again in Gaza, but his cruel enemies have now put out his eyes, and he is their prisoner. Look at him! The man, who in the strength of God

had struck terror into their hearts, and who had slain thousands of Philistines, is bound and blind, and is actually grinding corn for the very Philistines whose hosts he had routed, scattered and slain.

Not satisfied with that degradation, the lords of the Philistines resolved that at a great feast held in honour of their god Dagon, and to celebrate their victory over Samson, the blind, fallen hero shall be called in to play the fool before them, for that is what "making sport" really means.

Samson is brought out of prison with the bitterness of death in his soul. He has, however, one resource. He has broken his Nazarite vows; he has renounced his covenant; he has cast away a glorious opportunity of delivering his people; he has destroyed himself; but he has still the resource of prayer.

There he stands resting for a moment after playing the fool, while the thousands look on in contempt and amusement. His hands are on the pillars that support the building and he prays: "O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once." It is a prayer that breathes penitence, dependence and humility. The prayer is answered, and putting forth the supernatural strength, once more restored to him, Samson sways himself backwards for a moment. The pillars tremble and give way; and amid shrieks, groans and curses, the whole building collapses, and the blind hero lies buried, with his enemies, amidst the hideous ruins. The record closes with the words: "And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

SECRETARY DANIELS ON IMPURITY

Dealing with the social evil as a menace to the nation's military efficiency, Secretary Daniels, in an address before the Clinical Congress of Surgeons of North America at Chicago, spoke in condemnation of the unpardonable prudery that endured a festering evil rather than have it exposed and eradicated.

"There is not an army in the field," said he, "whose effectiveness is not reduced by reason of immoral diseases." The Secretary's figures are simply appalling. "During the last statistical year men of the American navy lost 141,387 days' sickness from a small group of absolutely preventable diseases, contracted by sin. This means that every day throughout the year there were 456 men disabled by this disgraceful malady. Add to that the number of those required to care for the disabled, and we have enough men on the non-effective list each day to man a modern battleship.

"In the navy in 1915 there were admitted for treatment for venereal diseases 112 persons in every 1,000. In the army 84 for every 1,000, the number in the army having decreased from 145 to the 1,000 after the passage of an act, *stopping the pay of all soldiers admitted for treatment for a venereal disease.*

"It has been stated that at one time the equivalent of three entire Austrian divisions of 60,000 men was under treatment for venereal diseases, while the German army in Belgium, representing only a small part of the total German forces, is reported during the first five months of its occupation to have furnished 35,000 such patients.

"Canadian and Australian officers deplore the ravages of this disgraceful and disgusting disease, while the latest figures from the British army gave 78,000 cases, and all other countries have also been weakened.

"A Canadian authority says its ravages to-day are more terrible for Britain and Canada than Vimy Ridge, the Somme and Lens. The time has come to realize that this subtlest foe of humanity, more deadly than smallpox or cancer or tuberculosis, must be conquered.

"To-day, as never before, American manhood must be clean. We must have fitness! America stands in need of every ounce of strength. We must cut out this cancer if we would live."

V

THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES

ONE of the courtiers of an ancient monarch was full of envy at his King's supposed prosperity and immunity from peril. He thought that there was not a particle of truth in the saying, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." The King's elevated rank, his great wealth and influence, the luxuries he enjoyed, and the homage he received were such delightful experiences that no room could possibly be left for anxious thought or care. So Damocles thought.

A hard experience had, however, taught the King that no station in life was exempt from life's sorrows and anxieties, its perils and trials. He had found that he could no more boast of to-morrow than the meanest peasant in his realm, and he resolved to impress this lesson on his discontented courtier. The King therefore invited Damocles to share his gifts and honours, together with the fortunes of royalty. The wealth of a kingdom was placed at his disposal; royal robes of softest texture were provided for him; the servants of the King waited upon him, and Damocles sat down to a royal banquet. For a while he dismissed the cares and vexations of life; the responsibilities which had oppressed him were forgotten; his cup of enjoyment was full to the brim, and he was just concluding that his surmise as to the exemption of the King from all care and peril was correct, when something led him to

look for a moment towards the ceiling of the banquet-hall, and he saw a sharp and heavy sword dangling over his head, suspended by a single hair.

In a moment the Sicilian delicacies on which he had been feasting lost their flavour. The music of the royal orchestra ceased to charm him. What heart could he have for anything with that sword hanging over him, ready at any moment to fall upon his head. He was simply panic-stricken and terrified, such fear and trembling took possession of him, that with a pallid face he turned away from the feast which had promised him so much enjoyment. However was it that a single hair had carried the weight of the sword so long?

Let him but escape from the banquet, which, at any moment, might prove a banquet of death, and he vowed he would never again envy the happiness of kings, nor imagine that they possessed immunity from anxiety or peril.

The experience of Damocles at the banquet has served to warn many a thoughtless soul. It speaks still to those whose judgment is darkened by a fatal blindness; whose soul is benumbed into insensibility by the poison of sin; who have not the faintest conception of the solemnity and responsibility of life; who have lost all sense of the relative value of things, and says, Remember the sword! There may be but a step between thee and death.

Belshazzar, the last of the Chaldean kings, mighty monarch though he was, forgot the sword. He lived in the greatest splendour. His servants were princes; his concubines were the daughters of kings. He could have had the counsel of wise men in ruling his vast empire, Daniel among the number, but he preferred the companionship and counsel of profli-

gates. Here is the story of how the forgotten sword fell.

It was night in Babylon. The shadows of her two hundred and fifty towers began to lengthen. The Euphrates rolled on, touched by the splendour of the setting sun. The gates of brass, burnished and glittering, opened and shut like doors of flame. The hanging gardens of Babylon, wet with the dew of the night, began to pour forth their fragrance.

There is a royal feast at the King's palace! The chariots, with their prancing horses, dash up to the gates, while a thousand lords dismount with their ladies dressed in all the splendours of Tyrian purple and Syrian emerald. Their robes are enriched with princely embroideries brought from afar by camels across the desert, and by ships of Tarshish across the sea.

Belshazzar's guests sat down at no common banquet that night. All parts of the earth had contributed their richest viands to that table. This is how the story reads in the old Book: "Belshazzar the King made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the King and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels . . . and they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone."

Who ever read of anything so blasphemous and defiant? Even Nebuchadnezzar, in all his might, never dreamt of any such profanity as this. We will venture to adapt Byron's description of the scene in

Brussels on the eve of the battle of Waterloo, for slightly altered it applies to the scene in Babylon.

“There was a sound of revelry by night,
And Babylonia had gathered then
Her beauty and her chivalry; and bright
The lights shone o’er fair women and brave men.
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spoke again.
They drink, they praise their gods in cups of wine;
They dare to put to this vile use, vessels Divine.
On with the feast! Let joy be unconfined;
That tramp of stealthy feet without, is but the wind.

But look! What ails the King! Support him lest he fall!
He sees the hand that writes his doom on yonder wall.”

“In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the King’s palace; and the King saw part of the hand that wrote. Then the King’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him; and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. . . . And this is the writing that was written and the interpretation:

MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end.

TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

PERES; thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

When the enchanters failed to interpret the writing, Daniel quickly put an end to the King’s suspense as to its meaning. He also reminded the panic-stricken King of Jehovah’s dealings with his father Nebuchadnezzar. “When his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven

from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that He setteth over it whomsoever He will."

Then, coming to the conduct of the crowned criminal who trembled before him on his golden chair, in the presence of his thousand lords and ladies, his wives and concubines; the fearless prophet of God said: "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, . . . and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold . . . which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

What about the sword? There it had been, as he sat at the banquet, like the sword of Damocles, suspended over his head by a single hair, and the hair had broken! Cyrus with his mighty army was at that very moment in possession of the palace. For two years he had been laying siege to the city. He took advantage of Belshazzar's carousal, and at the very time when the sacrilegious revelry was at its height, the warriors of Cyrus turned the Euphrates out of its channel; they marched up the bed of the river beneath the walls; they found the great brazen gates left open by the drunken Chaldean guards; and with a thousand gleaming swords they rushed upon the banqueters; the sword fell, and "that night was Belshazzar, King of the Chaldeans, slain."

What admonitory words those words of Daniel's were: "*Thou has not humbled thine heart though thou knewest all this.*" All Jehovah's disciplinary dealings with his father Nebuchadnezzar were lost

upon him. He knew all about the burning fiery furnace, and the appearance of a fourth in the midst of the flames like unto the Son of God; he knew all about his father's madness and its cause; he knew of his father's proclamation on his recovery from his insanity; he knew it all, but he forgot the sword. He trifled with God, crossed the dead-line and was lost.

Daniel does not charge Belshazzar with drunkenness, though he was drunk; nor with sacrilege, though he used those sacred vessels so profanely; nor with lasciviousness though there were tokens of it on every hand. Daniel passes from the superficial to the central. He lays no stress on the form of evil; *that* is largely accidental. All the emphasis is thrown on the essence of sin, which consists in man's failure to glorify God, for to glorify God is the chief end of man.

The supreme charge Daniel makes is: "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." It is a startling summary of man's wickedness; and it is all the more startling because of its severe simplicity. Sin consists not so much in definite acts of wrong-doing as in a wrong relation to God, and if any man is not making it the definite business of his life to glorify God, his life is a ghastly failure, no matter what he or others may think or say about it. He is weighed in the balances of God and found wanting.

There is another man, who, like Damocles, is feasting, oblivious of the fact that the sword is hanging over him. Listen! He is talking to his soul. What a prosperous year he has had! His barns are filled and bursting; his bank account is bulging and swelling; his acres are constantly increasing, and his labourers are becoming more and more numerous.

"Soul," he says, "thou has much goods laid up for *many years*." He has had a strenuous life, now he is going to have many years of respite. "Soul, take thine *ease*!" He has been too busy to enjoy life; all his energies have been devoted to making his fortune. "Soul, *eat, drink and be merry*." "But God!" He had forgotten there was a God. "This night," said the God he had ignored and failed to glorify, "this night shall thy soul be required of thee." That night the sword fell, and he lost four things.

He lost his name, his neighbours and friends called him clever but God called him "fool." He lost his possessions. "Our last garment," says a grim Italian proverb, "is made without pockets." He dragged a poor, starved, shrivelled soul out into the darkness. His possessions went one way and he went another. He lost his "soul." "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" asks Jesus. He lost heaven. "So is every one that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

There is no strange handwriting on the wall,
Through all the midnight hum no threatening call
Nor on the marble floor the stealthy fall
Of fatal footsteps. All is safe. "Thou fool!
The avenging deities are shod with wool."

—Without a hiding-place
To hide me from the terrors of Thy Face.—
"Thy hiding-place is here
In Mine own heart; wherefore the Roman spear
For thy sake I accounted dear."—
My Jesus! King of Grace.

—Without a pool wherein
To wash my piteous self and make me clean.—
"My Blood hath washed away
Thy guilt, and still I wash thee day by day:
Only take heed to trust and pray."—
LORD, HELP ME TO BEGIN.

—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

VI

THREE OF KING DAVID'S GENERALS

IT is quite customary to this day, for monarchs, on eventful occasions in their reign, to publish a list of the names of those whom they delight to honour. David had just been anointed at Hebron, king over all the twelve tribes. He was anointed three times as king. First of all, as you remember, he was anointed privately among his own family (I Sam. 16:33). Then he was anointed at Hebron. This time it was not a private but a public act, but it was only over Judah (II Sam. 2:4). Then there came this third anointing to which I have referred. It took place twenty years after the first, and seven years after the second. So we read: "Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron . . . and they anointed David King over Israel" (II Sam. 5:1-3). "He reigned in Hebron over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah" (ver. 5).

We can well understand that on an occasion so memorable David should found the first order of chivalry, and give his thirty knights, as they would at one time have been designated, their special rank and high privileges; recording their names on the Roll of Honour. Hence we read: "These also are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel to make him King, according to

the word of the Lord concerning Israel" (I Chron. 11:10).

David's elevation to the throne of all Israel was of course largely due to his own character and heroic deeds. But he could never have attained to this position of responsibility and dignity, had not these mighty men strengthened themselves with him to make him King. They did this we read, "According to the word of the Lord," that is to say, they took their part both then and afterwards, solely on the ground that they were carrying out the Divine will.

It is instructive to note that fact. The heroes whose deeds of valour are recorded here were rendering, whether they fully realized it or not, a real service to their race. The reign of King David had an important bearing upon the whole plan of God's Providence. It was an essential link in the whole redemptive chain. That fact invests the exploits of these "mighty men" as they are called, with great significance. They helped to place David on the throne, and they sustained him on the throne, contributing to the prosperity of the nation, the glory of God, and the emancipation of their fellows.

That eloquent preacher, Bishop Phillips Brooks, said, when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated: "If ever the face of a man writing solemn words glowed with a solemn joy, it must have been the face of Abraham Lincoln as he bent over the pages where the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 was growing into shape, and giving manhood and freedom as he wrote it to hundreds of thousands of his fellow-men. Here was an act that crowned the whole culture of his life. All the past, the free boyhood in the woods, the free youth upon the farm, the free manhood in the honourable citizen's employment—

all his freedom gathered and completed itself in this.

"As the swarthy multitudes came in, ragged, and tired, and hungry, and ignorant, but free for ever from anything but the memorial scars of the fetters and the whip; singing rude songs in which the new triumph of freedom struggled and heaved below the sad melody that had been shaped for bondage; as in their camps and hovels there grew up to their half-superstitious eyes the image of a great father almost more than man, to whom they owed their freedom—were they not half right?"

And all who enlisted themselves, in response to Abraham Lincoln's call in the sixties, as Soldiers of Freedom, have a place on the roll of honour, like those whose names are written in the twenty-third chapter of the Second Book of Samuel. But for their valour the pen of Lincoln would never have signed that Emancipation Proclamation. They are gone, but

. . . "To us are left
Our buried heroes and their matchless deeds.
These cannot pass; they hold the vital seeds
Which in the far, untracked, unvisioned hour
Burst forth to vivid bud and glorious flower."

Are we not to-day witnessing this "bursting forth to bud and flower" in the formation of a great National Army, designated by President Woodrow Wilson, "Soldiers of Freedom"?

King David's heroes were divided into several classes: "This is the number of mighty men whom David had: Jashobeam, an Hachmomite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear against eight hundred slain by him at one time." He well deserves to be remembered as General Jashobeam, for

as the record tells us he was "the chief of the captains" (II Sam. 23:8). He was appointed commander of the first brigade of twenty-four thousand men. (See I Chron. 27:2.)

Then came General Eleazar. He was "one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines that were gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: he arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the Lord wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil" (II Sam. 23:9, 10).

Instances of a similar kind are recorded in history, where there are also examples of sword-cramp like that from which the brave Eleazar suffered after his wonderful exploit. We are reminded of Ajax who beat down the Trojan leader with a rock which two ordinary men could scarcely lift; of Horatius defending the bridge against a whole army; of Richard the lion-hearted who spurred along the whole Saracen line without finding an enemy to stand his assault, and of many others, of whom time and space forbid the mention.

Next in order of the first three comes General Shammah. Of his mighty deeds we read: "And the Philistines were gathered together for foraging (see margin) where was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the plot, and defended it and slew the Philistines and the Lord wrought a great victory" (II Sam. 23:11, 12).

Let us not overlook the significance of the last words of this record which are found also in verse ten. "Jehovah wrought a great victory." "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was

on our side, when men rose up against us: then had they swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. . . . Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth" (Psalm 124:1-6). It may be wise to listen to Cowper just at this time:

"Hast thou not learned what thou art often told,
A truth still sacred, and believed of old,
That no success attends on spears and swords
Unblest, and that the battle is the Lord's?"

The incident just recorded is all we know of Shammah, but it is enough to put him into the list of immortals. The scene is described in a few strokes of the pen by the historian. There is a common piece of ground outside one of the towns of Israel, a piece of ground cultivated by the people. Just now it is covered with a fine crop of lentils. Suddenly there is a cry, "The Philistines! the Philistines!" A troop of them are out foraging, and they have crept along the bed of a dry water-course, thinking the field of lentils fair prey. With a rush and a shout they break cover. Down go the spades! Away scuttle the frightened Israelites—anywhere to escape from the cruel Philistines. All fly but one.

There is one man who stands his ground. No troop of Philistines will make him run. He has no sword, but he seizes his mattock and all round that plot of lentils when he has finished using that mattock is a ghastly ring of slain Philistines. The way Shammah's spade swung round his head that day was marvellous. He seemed to be everywhere at once. No braver stand in Israel had been made since the day when Samson slew a whole heap of Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. Well did Sham-

mah deserve to be promoted, and to receive from his King the rank of Major General.

What a lesson there is in this story! Shammah *plus* Jehovah spells victory. Some young man is reading this who has perhaps fallen a prey to the Philistines. Like hundreds of others, you have gone down before those malignant allies of the pit—the world, the flesh and the devil. You have been defeated so often, and so frequently put to shame in spite of your good resolves, that the very cry: “The Philistines! the Philistines!” fills you with panic, and you fall a victim to their assaults without striking a single blow.

Are you for ever going to be trodden under foot by the enemy? Is it not time you learnt the meaning of that verse: “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under *your* feet?” Yielded to Jesus Christ, whose victory over Satan was absolute, you will find that His victories become yours. Instead of flying from the enemy; instead of yielding to the cruel oppressor, and giving him the opportunity of forging another link in the chain that binds you in degenerating captivity, try the method of Shammah. Resist the onset that has hitherto swept you off your feet, and then see what will happen? This is what will happen: “Resist the devil, and *he will flee from you.*” Call upon Jesus Christ, and tell Him you would rather die than run; that you would rather die than yield, and you will soon see who will do the running. The devil will flee from you.

Does Satan whisper: “It is too late now to retrieve that past!” Thank God it is not too late. I look into the faces of the young men I meet, and how many tell the sad story of dissipation. How many of those faces have written upon them in letters of fire: “Overborne!” “Overcome!” “De-

feated!" "Dispirited!" The Philistines have been out on their foraging expeditions, as in the days of Shammah,—they are always out on this errand,—and there does not seem much left in many a life of manliness and purity and nobility and chivalry. Courage, brother, though the outlook be dark as night. Stand up in the middle of the wreck, like Shammah did, and you will soon be tasting the sweets of victory. And the years that have been devoured by the locust God will restore.

One who had been overcome again and again by a besetting sin heard a message when bowed one day in shame and contrition before God because of another defeat; and the message was this: "The Egyptians whom you have seen to-day, you shall see again no more for ever." That Christian soldier believed the word, and thanked God for it. The vision became a glorious reality, and the name of that victor stands high on the roll of God's valiant ones to-day. Where will your name stand?

VII

THE FIGHT FOR MANSOUL

OUR Lord's teaching about Satan is exceedingly important in view of the heresy which is being so widely propagated, even in some of the great universities of this land, that the devil is simply a principle of evil, a malign influence, and that as a real person he does not exist. The devil can achieve no greater triumph than to innoculate men and women with the notion that he is non-existent.

Personality, with all its attendant attributes, is ascribed in the Scriptures both to Satan and to that innumerable army of demons who do his bidding. It is ascribed to them just as unmistakably as to men or as to God Himself. The wickedness of any other method of interpretation is that it destroys the truth and honesty of God's Word. What, for example, can be plainer than these words of our Lord's: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father thereof" (John 8:44). These words ought to settle beyond all controversy the question of Satan's personality. Jesus says he is a sinner from the beginning; he is an homicide from the beginning; he is an arch-liar, and a renegade for "he abode not in the truth."

It has often been said that the great doctrine of the Atonement runs like a scarlet thread through the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelations. It is equally true that there is a black thread running throughout the Book. You can trace the slimy trail of the Serpent from the opening words of the third chapter of Genesis: "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." You can follow it on and on for thousands of years, until it is lost in one of the closing chapters of the Revelation in the welcome words: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

As God and the agencies He has at His disposal, by a thousand means and ministries, seek man's salvation, so Satan and his agents in ways that are diabolical in their cunning and subtlety, seek man's ruin and destruction. God is perpetually working for order and separation, Satan is perpetually working for disorder and confusion. It is simply through his agency that the Church to-day, instead of being absolutely separate from the World, is nothing but a mixed multitude. Instead of being the chaste virgin, the Bride of Christ is seen flirting with the same World that put Jesus to death, for because the World's character is unchanged and unchanging, she would do so again to-morrow if she had the opportunity.

What a stupendous conflict is taking place around us! Here is an arena where the forces of darkness and light are engaged in the fiercest battling, not for empires but for souls; and weighed in the balances of God, empires are but as the small dust of the balance compared to souls.

Our Lord gives us a picture of this conflict in the following words: "Whenever a strong man, fully armed and equipped, is guarding his own castle, he enjoys peaceful possession of his property; but as soon as another stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away that complete armour of his in which he trusted, and distributes the plunder he has collected. Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever is not gathering with Me is scattering abroad" (Luke 11:21-23, Weymouth's translation).

1. *The first picture is Mansoul possessed by Satan and in peace.*

Note that our Lord never underestimates the power of Satan. He speaks of him in this passage as "a strong man, fully armed and equipped." There is no surer way to suffer an ignominious defeat than to underestimate the strength and skill of the enemy. The people of Great Britain laughed at the Boer farmers at the outbreak of the South African War, but when the brave British soldiers bit the dust again and again, the laughter ceased, and they learned to respect the skill and prowess of their foe.

The devil loves to hear men laughing and joking about him. Only let them take liberties with him, and treat him as a huge joke, and before very long they will have abundant cause to repent of their folly. Satan, with his six thousand years' experience in the art of seducing and destroying men, is an adversary not to be despised or trifled with.

Our Lord pictures him in the passage "guarding his own castle, and in peaceful possession of his property." He enjoys undisturbed possession. He is as much at home as you are in your own house.

You put your key in the lock and the door opens to you, and when you have closed it none can have entrance without your consent. You go to and fro in its apartments, furnishing them as suits your taste and convenience. It is your house and you do what you like with it.

The unsaved man is, in the same way, Satan's own castle, and he enjoys peaceful possession of his property. He just as truly incarnates himself in a man's nature as the Holy Spirit does; and every man is either the castle of Satan, or the temple of the Holy Spirit. Satan is described by the Apostle Paul as "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Unsaved men are children of disobedience, because refusing to obey God, the wrath of God is come upon them, and as the Apostle says in another place, they are "carried away captive by the devil at his will" (II Tim. 2:26). That is a captivity a thousand times worse than Egyptian bondage. The *soul* is in captivity, and it is bound in fetters which none can break but the Stronger than the strong man. Satan leads his victims on, step by step, binding tighter and ever tighter the cords of destruction, his one object being to make his captives sharers of his doom in that abode of darkness and agony, prepared, not for man, but "prepared for the devil and his angels."

Everything in the castle is quiet when the strong man is thus in peaceful possession of his property. Nothing is more dreaded by Satan than a disturbance of that false security, that counterfeit peace. All he desires is that his captives shall be led quietly to their doom; careless as to their immortal destiny; blind to the redemption that has been provided at so great a cost; and unconcerned as to their inevitable banishment from God and from the glory of

His power. So he uses the armour with which he is equipped to this end.

"Peace!" he cries, when the bell of Conscience rings under some awakening providence. "Peace! you are as good as others, and far better than many." "Peace!" he whispers, when the claims of Jesus Christ are presented; "if you must be religious, be satisfied with the form of godliness, and don't go to any extremes." "Peace!" he says, when a comrade falls at your side altogether unprepared for death; "*you have a long time to live*; enjoy life while you may; attend to serious things tomorrow!" And so the poor soul is lulled to sleep, until there comes that awful awakening, when "all unfurnished for the world to come," the lost soul sinks into perdition, and enters that dread abode of the lost, over whose portals is inscribed, "All hope abandon ye who enter here!"

2. *The second picture is Mansoul in a state of siege.*

A Stronger than he attacks the strong man fully armed and equipped. The castle has now passed from a state of peace to a state of war. It is no longer in a condition of false security. The shock of battle is felt. The Strong Son of God, to whom the castle belongs by the purchase-price of His own blood, lays siege to the castle, now by ordinary, and now by extraordinary methods. The Holy Spirit directs the powerful siege guns of the Gospel which thunder at the walls, and tear up the foundations of the soul's false confidence. Now He is in possession of the bridge-head, and then, seeing that further resistance is useless, Satan is compelled to retire, and Emmanuel takes possession of His own.

Sometimes in a few moments all the strongholds and entrenchments that Satanic ingenuity has so

carefully erected are destroyed. I know one who was riding to the race-course, when at the entrance, a little tract was put into his hand with this question printed at the top as a title, "Where will you spend Eternity?" That question broke up all the devil's positions in a moment; and riding back swiftly to his home, and handing his horse to the groom, that young man decided on his face before God, that he would spend Eternity in the realms of bliss and in the company of the redeemed. He has been for many years one of the foremost preachers in London, and has led thousands into a saving acquaintance with Jesus Christ.

Is this conflict going on in your heart at this moment? Beseech the Stronger than the strong not to leave you to the power of your cruel adversary. And while hell is moved from beneath at the conflict; while angels look on with deepest interest and profoundest sympathy; while tens of thousands of prayers ascend to the throne of grace on your behalf, let the castle be surrendered. Run up the white flag of submission, and all the bells of heaven will be set a-ringing, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

3. *The third picture is Mansoul conquered and possessed.*

As soon as another, Stronger than Satan, attacks him and overcomes him, "He takes away that complete armour of his in which he trusted, and distributes the plunder he has collected." The victory is won. The black flag of rebellion has been hauled down, and the crimson standard of the Cross flies in its place. All Satan's armour is taken from him, and, as Emmanuel enters the castle in triumph, He divides the spoil. The lips that once

blasphemed now sing Emmanuel's praise; the feet that were swift to do evil, now run on the King's errands; the hands that were defiled with sin, are now holy hands, lifted up in earnest intercession or outstretched in loving ministry; the chambers of imagery are purified and new pictures are hung upon the walls; the windows and observatories, darkened by sin, are cleansed, and reveal visions which uncircumcised eyes never saw; the sociable and winsome disposition—once Satan's favourite weapon—is now used to win men to God. All the armour in which Satan trusted, and which he employed for his hellish purposes is taken from him, and the government of the castle is now in the hands and upon the shoulders of Jesus.

When Mansoul had to be surrendered to Emmanuel, according to John Bunyan in *the Holy War*, Diabolus sent his ambassador with this among other suggestions at compromise: "Behold, sir, the condescension of my master! He says he will be content if he may but have a place assigned to him in Mansoul, as a place to live in privately, and you shall be lord of all the rest." Then answered Emmanuel: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and of all that He giveth Me I will lose nothing; no not a hoof nor a hair. I will not therefore grant him, no, not the least corner in Mansoul, to dwell in, I will have it all to Myself." Blessed be His name that He so determines!

The part we have to play in this fight for Mansoul is suggested by the closing words of the remarkable passage we have been considering. "He that is not with Me is against Me." You can be in confederacy with Satan or with Emmanuel. You can refuse to surrender the castle to Him, who bought the right to cleanse and possess it with His

own precious blood; or you can say as you make an unreserved submission:

“Through grace I hearken to Thy voice,
Yield to be saved from sin;
In sure and certain hope rejoice,
That Thou wilt enter in.”

“Men don't believe in a Devil now, as their fathers used to do;
They've forced the door of the broadest creed to let his majesty through:
There isn't a print of his cloven foot, or a fiery dart from his bow
To be found in the earth or air to-day, for the world has voted so.
But who is it mixing the fatal draught that palsies heart and brain.
And loads the bier of each passing year with ten hundred thousand slain?
Who blights the bloom of the land to-day with the fiery breath of hell,
If the Devil isn't and never was? Won't somebody rise and tell?
Who dogs the steps of the toiling saint, and digs the pit for his feet?
Who sows the tares in the field of Time wherever God sows the wheat?
The Devil is voted not to be, and, of course, the thing is true;
But who is doing the kind of work the Devil alone should do?
Won't someone step to the front forthwith, and make their bow and show
How the frauds and crimes of a single day spring up?
We want to know.
The Devil is fairly voted out, and of course the Devil's gone,
But simple people would like to know who carries his business on.”

VIII

GUARDING THE OUTPOSTS

NO small part of military success depends on the care taken of the outposts. There is nothing of the magnificence of the crowded camp about them. Each outpost is occupied by a few soldiers at the most, often by a single sentinel. It may seem a very trifling business to do nothing but to watch, and to send an occasional report to headquarters. The romance of war in an open country is associated with the thunder of great guns, the sharp rattle of musketry, the ringing sound of the trumpet, the drawing up in battle-array of armies, the waving banners, the rush of cavalry, the deadly assault, the smoke of conflict, the shout of them that strive for the mastery, the huzza of victory.

How unlike all this is the still life at a distant outpost! There is no romance in mere vigilance. Passion is stirred by attack. A soldier feels that he is part of a host, and himself an element of power when marching in the ranks of the main army; but there is little to stir enthusiasm in being sent away into the woods, or to distant hills to watch for what may never appear; to guard what may never be attacked. Just as though the enemy would trouble himself about insignificant outposts, when there is a central camp to be assaulted.

But who that is at all familiar with warfare does not know that danger begins at the outposts? These must be passed before the camp can be reached, and

if the enemy meditates a surprise, nothing can prevent it but the vigilance of the distant sentries. They have the honour and responsibility of being nearest the foe. Many an army has been lost by the neglect of the commander to take sufficient precautions against a sudden night-attack. Many a city has been captured through the absence of even a single sentry from his beat. The rules of war are severe on this point. One man must not be allowed to endanger an army. This was one of the military regulations to which Napoleon the Great gave personal attention, frequently going the rounds in the darkness to see that all the outposts were well guarded, and death was the penalty of a sentinel found asleep at his post.

All these facts have their counterpart in the spiritual conflict. The danger usually begins at the outposts. There the enemy first shows himself, and many a citadel has been taken because there has been carelessness, a relaxing of the necessary vigilance at the outposts.

The *thoughts* are among the most important of the outposts in our spiritual life. "As a man *thinketh in his heart* so is he," says the Word of God. All activity is the result of thought. Everything you do in any relationship of life is the direct outcome of some underlying thought. Put it like this: At the back of all activity is reason; behind every choice that man makes there is an impelling cause; that impelling cause is a thought. I watch what you do. I cannot watch what you think, but I know what you think from what you do.

You stand in the streets of a city. Here is a man who crosses from one side of the road to the other. Before he crossed he thought of crossing, and you know his prior thought by that action. Yonder is a

man who is arrested by a sensational placard of a play at the theatre. He thought before he decided to stop and read it. The principle applies in all realms of human activity. What you think is manifest in what you do. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

Dr. J. H. Jowett puts it thus: "A man's thoughts determine the moral climate of his life, and will settle the question whether his conduct is to be a poisonous marsh or a fertile meadow, a fragrant garden or a stretch of barren sand. The pose of the mind determines the disposition, and will settle whether a man shall soar with the angels in the heavenlies, or wallow with the sow in the mire."

The sin does not consist in the mere act; it lies back of the action, in the thought, the intention, the motive that inspired it. You sinned in thought first and then you sinned in deed. In that black catalogue of sins in Matthew 15:19 Jesus puts evil thoughts first in the list, and says: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man." That is the true generation of crime. Thoughts are the parent of deeds; good thoughts of good deeds and bad thoughts of bad deeds.

The real difference between a good man and a bad man is this—the one fosters and cherishes the thought of evil; the other repudiates and repels it. During the Revolutionary War the same temptation was offered to two men, Reed and Benedict Arnold. Reed said: "I am a poor man, but no king is rich enough to buy me." Benedict Arnold clutched the gold, and his name drifts down through American history, an object of obloquy and contempt. The difference is here, the one was hospitable

to a bad thought and the hospitality he gave to it ruined him. The other refused to entertain it, and said to the damnable proposal, "Keep out!"

Many a man would start with horror from a full-grown sin, and say with Hazael: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" But he nurses and dandles the infant sin in his heart in the form of a bad thought, and like Hazael he does it. The sensualist is only a filthy thinker; the miser is only a covetous and grasping thinker; the glutton is only a greedy thinker. Tell me what your soul turns to, and thinks about when left alone, and I will determine your spiritual character, for "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

All good and evil commences at the outposts of the thoughts. Relax your vigilance at the outposts, suffer the evil thoughts to pass unchallenged, and you have taken the first step to the ruin of your character. Let me tell you of one of the tragedies of nature. There is a certain fly that lives in a very ingenious manner. Some rude instinct impels it to make provision for its progeny in this way: When it wishes to lay its eggs it pierces the soft body of a certain caterpillar and deposits them there. Apparently this action causes the caterpillar no discomfort. But soon the warm body of the grub hatches the eggs, and then the doom of the caterpillar is sealed, for the wretched lodgers, awakened to life, at once commence to feed upon the body of their benefactor, and continue doing so until life is extinct. Many a man who has given hospitality to evil thoughts has found in after years that, like these horrible parasites, they have fed upon his best nature and ruined it.

A few practical suggestions may be useful.

1. *Remember that you control the material of your thoughts.*

There is a common idea cherished that suggestions and thoughts are absolutely put into our mind by God or Satan, and some find this an easy way of accounting for the good and bad thoughts that possess them. It is more convenient to cast the responsibility elsewhere than to admit that no one is to blame but ourselves.

Thought is really the comparison, selection and association of the actual contents of our minds, under the guidance of our will. All that has impressed us by the eyes, the ears, the feelings has passed into our mental treasury. It is all there, and it is all linked together by the subtlest and strangest connections. You are adding to that treasury every day by your reading, and by all the other uses you make of eyes and ears. What we call *thinking*, is simply taking from that treasury what you will of its contents, and arranging them to form new ideas and purposes. With what stores are you enriching that treasury? Your life is so far in your own hands that you can provide the material for your thoughts.

Put yourself in association with things that are pure and good, cherish holy thoughts and aspirations, and you will become pure and good. Read unclean books, indulge in stories that are suggestive of filth, engage in impure conversation, and you fill your treasury with corruption, a corruption that will sooner or later blossom into action, and poison your life. Do not imagine for a moment that you are innocent if you love to meditate upon anything which you would blush to avow before men, or fear to unveil before God. Remember that what is inside, in the way of settled, persistent thought will

be sure to be reproduced in the outward life. Therefore, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things*" (Phil. 4:8).

2. *Remember that character originates in thought.*

All character originates in thought. Was it not Butler who said: "Sow the act and you reap the habit; sow the habit and you reap the character; sow the character and you reap the destiny"? But as we have seen there is something farther back than the act in the outpost of the thoughts, so that we may add, "Sow the thought and you reap the act." Your thoughts not only reveal what you are, they make you what you are. Nothing seems less substantial, yet nothing is of greater consequence, for your thought-life is the factory where character is manufactured. The face is like the dial face of the watch, it tells you of what is going on within. You can read character in the countenance. Those coarse, foul thoughts make a sensual, repulsive face. Holy thoughts will make the face shine like the face of an angel, because the cultivation of holy thoughts inevitably produces a holy character. Tell me what your thought life is and I will tell you what kind of character you are building for eternity.

3. *Remember that you cannot think two thoughts at once.*

Many a young man is puzzled as to how to rid himself of evil thoughts. You cannot *will* such thoughts out of your mind; a mere act of volition is not enough. The very effort to eject the intruder by the

action of the will only fastens it there more firmly. You can, however, displace it by another, for you cannot think two thoughts at once. The parable of the unclean spirit is very suggestive. The man out of whom the evil spirit went, neglected to fill up the empty, swept and garnished spaces with good spirits so that there was room for the returning evil, and in sevenfold worse forms than before. You have this measure of control over the outposts that you may garrison them with thoughts that are pure and good; you can hang on the chambers of your imagination pictures that elevate and inspire to higher and nobler achievement, or you can hang there pictures that will blight and blast your life.

Some men are so mentally impoverished that when they reach out for some great thought to displace an intruder from hell, they cannot find it. Time that might have been spent in enriching the mind and furnishing the treasury with good thoughts has been idled away in gossip and frivolity. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart," says the Psalmist, "that I might not sin against Thee." The Word of God packed away in the heart, day by day, will furnish you with ammunition for the day of battle; for the mightiest weapon in this fight for the outposts is the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

IX

“PURE AND CLEAN, THROUGH AND THROUGH”

“Let it be your pride, therefore, to show all men everywhere, not only what good soldiers you are, but also what good men you are, keeping yourselves fit and straight in everything, and pure and clean through and through.”—*President Wilson’s Message to the Soldiers of the National Army.*

THOUSANDS of Christian people have thanked God for this ringing challenge from the President to our soldiers to live a clean life, for no more subtle and powerful temptations beset our boys than those to lower this standard, and so to become a reproach instead of a pride. My purpose is to show how the splendid ideal of the message at the head of the chapter may become real; how these possibilities may become actualities in the experience of every man who will take as much pains to observe the directions of God’s Word as he does to observe the directions of his instructors in military strategy.

If I were asked to preach a sermon on the subject of this chapter—“Pure and clean, through and through”—I should turn first to the Book of Proverbs, for in chapter 4, verse 23, I find these words: “Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.” It is as if the inspired teacher said: “Guard your money, your property, your health, your body, everything in which you have a legitimate interest, or which is advantageous to your welfare, *but before and above everything*

else, keep a guard on your heart." The word "*for*" introduces the reason, "*for out of it are the issues of life.*"

That is to say, the moral conduct of life, its actions and proceedings are all determined by the condition of the heart. If the heart is "pure and clean through and through," the life will be pure and clean. If the heart is impure and corrupt, the life will be impure and corrupt. The heart is here compared to a fountain, and if the streams are to be pure so must be the fountain. No one expects sweet and pure water from a bitter and brackish fountain.

Physically the heart is the central organ of the body. Just as from the heart the blood is propelled to every part of the body, keeping the red stream of life always moving, so, spiritually, out of that part of our nature which is called the "heart" the "issues," the flowings or streams of life proceed.

The Old Testament locates the heart in the centre of the personal being. It is not merely the home of the affections, it is also the throne of the intellect and the seat of the will, or the moral purpose. The issues of life flow from it in all their multitudinous forms. The stream parts into many heads, but it has one fountain. It avails little to plant watchers on the stream half-way to the sea. If control is to be effectual it must be exercised at the source. That is a commonplace of all wholesome teaching since the beginning of the world.

The Scriptural conception of the heart is that it is the centre where three things are perpetually being focussed; the mind or the intellectual powers; the emotions or the affectional powers; the will or the volitional powers. What you think about, what you delight in, what you purpose. You are what you are in these three things; mind, desires and will.

A cleansed heart simply means the purification of the stream of your thoughts; the cleansing of your desires, and the adjustment of your will. To be “clean and pure through and through” means, therefore, to have a cleansed mind, cleansed desires and a cleansed or loyal will.

How can this purity, without which all challenges to a clean life are utterly in vain, be obtained?

Jesus Christ is exactly to you what your faith takes Him to be. The law of the spiritual life always is “*According to your faith be it unto you.*” One of the familiar words in the literature of to-day is, “Attain!” “Attain!” “Attain!” I would substitute another word, “Obtain!” for nothing in the kingdom of grace is first of all by attainment but by obtainment. The only one who ever *attained* to a righteous life was Jesus Christ; and we *obtain* His righteousness by faith. The only one who ever *attained* to holiness was Jesus Christ, and we *obtain* His holiness by faith. In one sentence, His attainments were all for us, and become our obtainments by faith. One of the greatest passages in the New Testament is this: “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us a Wisdom consisting of Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption” (I Cor. 1:30). Wisdom is the casket, and in the casket are these three precious jewels, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption. All are to be had for the claiming. How strange that we should be content with so little when we might have so much!

I have read of a German prince who once gave to his betrothed, on the eve of their marriage, an iron egg. In her disgust at such a gift she threw it on the ground. In contact with the ground a spring was released and the egg flew open, revealing a sil-

ver lining. She picked it up, and found another spring which revealed a golden yolk. Still another surprise awaited the no longer indignant but curious princess. In the golden yolk she detected a tiny spring which brought to light a priceless diamond ring. Wisdom is the iron egg. The silver lining is Righteousness, the golden yoke is Sanctification and the diamond ring is Redemption, for Redemption embraces Christ's whole work, from our rescue from sin to our final glorification.

Endeavour to grasp the meaning of this great Scripture: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just (righteous) to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

God has made ample provision for the complete and glorious pardon of all your sins, and until this word of pardon is spoken to your heart it is vain to expect peace or purity.

What a wonderful pardon it is! "According to the height of the heavens above the earth, so great is His mercy towards them that fear Him" (Ps. 103:11 margin). "According to the height of the heavens above the earth"—you cannot measure that distance; no astronomer can do it. The astronomer can tell you, for example, how distant the sun is from the earth. Sir Robert Ball tells us that the actual distance of the sun from the earth is about 92,700,000 miles. We are talking much in these days about millions and billions. Ninety-two millions is a very large number. It would be necessary to count as quickly as possible for three days and three nights before one million was completed; and you would have to repeat this nearly ninety-three times before you had counted all the miles between the earth and the sun.

But when you have travelled from the earth to

the sun, if such a journey were possible, you have not reached the height of the heavens. No matter how far you could go there are worlds and heights and distances that are simply immeasurable by any calculation of ours, and God says: "According to the height of the heavens above the earth so great is His mercy towards those that fear Him." Well may the poet exclaim, "Who is a pardoning God like Thee?" Every man knows that he needs more than pardon. Pardon alone will not make a man "pure and clean, through and through." He needs cleansing also, and cleansing means more and goes further than pardon or forgiveness. God has made as large and as full and as adequate provision for our cleansing from all unrighteousness as for the pardon of our sins. Cleansing means more and goes deeper. Forgiveness is something which takes place in God's heart; cleansing is something which takes place in mine. Forgiveness deals with the acts of transgression, and the guilt that is incurred thereby; cleansing deals with the inward dispositions from which the outward acts spring. Forgiveness deals with the punishment of sin; cleansing deals with its defilement and domination. Forgiveness restores me to a right relation to God; cleansing fits me for communion with Him.

Never forget that the cleansing is as complete as the pardon; that it rests upon the same foundation as pardon, and is therefore just as certain, and that whoever puts cleansing in doubt, puts pardon in doubt also.

What are the conditions upon which this pardon and purity may be yours? There are two, Confession and Faith. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That does

not mean a hasty confession, a partial confession, an apologetic confession, a hesitating confession. It means a frank and full confession, like David's in the fifty-first Psalm.

The greatest living theologian, Professor James Denny, D.D., says: "There is power in the blood of Jesus to cleanse us from all sin, and there is no power to cleanse us anywhere else, but it needs the condition of openness and sincerity. We cannot be cleansed from the sin we do not confess. We cannot be cleansed from the sin we excuse. We cannot be cleansed from the sin to which we are secretly resolved to cling. There is no such thing as negotiation, transaction or compromise possible in the relations of God and man. Everything is absolute. We may take the Gospel or leave it, but we cannot bargain about it. We may be cleansed from all sin, or from none, but not from some on condition of retaining others. Renounce with all your heart everything secret and insincere. Let there be nothing hidden in your life, no unavowed ends, no prevarications, no reserves. Insincerity, the dark atmosphere in which so many souls live, is in its turn one of the forms of sin from which the blood of Christ cleanses; and as we confess it, and disown it, and bring it to the cleansing blood, it also loses its power. This is the way in which all the wealth of the Gospel becomes ours." Those are golden words and well worth pondering.

After this frank, full, free confession, *rest in the faithfulness of God*. Have you been faithful in your confession? Infinitely more faithful is He in your forgiveness and cleansing. Do not look for feelings, and do not think of your faith, but let the *faithfulness of God* fill the whole circle of your vision, until you grow blind to feelings, blind even to faith, blind

to all but the loving faithfulness of a God who cannot break His Word without ceasing to be God.

Without the slightest procrastination, hesitation or misgiving, take upon your lips that prayer of the penitent King, whose shameful story of sin is told in God's Word in all its naked ugliness: "Wash me thoroughly from my transgressions, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." As in his case so in yours, the prayer will be answered, and your tongue will sing aloud of His righteousness.

"O Lord, I lift that passionate prayer of old,
My sins as scarlet are; my life, to Thee
An open page, how deeply marred! yet bold
I plead for cleansing. Jesus' blood shall free
This soul of mine from shame, from guilt, from woe.
O wash me, Lord, yes, whiter than the snow."

X

THE SOLDIER'S DRILL BOOK

No. 1. "WATCH YE!"

AT the close of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 16:13) there is an exhortation consisting of four short, impetuous, imperatives, revealing a sudden outburst of emotion as the writer draws to a close. They ring sharp and clear like pistol-shots. They are like the word of command shouted from an officer along the ranks, and there is a military metaphor running through them all. The associations of battle breathe in every word.

As the enemy gathers in the distance, half hidden by the brow of a hill or beneath the shadow of the forest, and it remains doubtful for the moment at what quarter the storm will break, and the attack be made, the warning to vigilance rings out—"Watch ye!"

As the foe advances, and the threatening masses roll onwards, as the strong columns of the enemy threaten to overwhelm the slender line of the defenders, the clear, strident voice of the officer is heard in the momentary hush of suspense, exhorting his men to steadiness and constancy—"Stand fast!"

And when the battle is joined; and like two angry tides, the opposing lines meet, clash and break, warrior contending with warrior in hand-to-hand con-

flict for the mastery, amid the shouting and the tumult, the same clear voice is heard calling—*"Quit you like men!"*

Beneath the fury of the assault, the line of the defenders shakes and wavers. Now is the time for every man to strike a man's stroke, and to display the heroism that is ready to die, but is resolved never to yield. So the dauntless leader cries aloud to his brave warriors—*"Be strong!"*

This page in the Soldier's Drill Book contains therefore these four stirring challenges, upon each of which we propose to dwell. The first is a call to vigilance, *"Watch ye!"* or as Dr. Weymouth translates it: *"Be on the alert!"*

Patrick Henry's axiom ought to be in the memory of every soldier: *"Eternal vigilance is the price of safety."* *"Watch ye!"* The figure is undoubtedly a military one. No matter what massive walls, or what carefully concealed guns guard yonder fortress something more is necessary. And so up and down those ramparts, by day and by night, paces the sentinel, ready to give the alarm at the first sign of approaching danger, that the troops within the fortress may be warned, and put themselves in readiness to receive an attack.

If you have ever visited the Heights of Abraham in Quebec, and looked down on those precipitous cliffs which make it the strongest natural citadel in Canada, you cannot but feel amazed that General Wolfe and a little company of English soldiers were able to capture it with comparative ease. *"It would seem,"* said a visitor to a guardsman, *"as if a band of schoolboys might have held this fort against an army. How did it happen that the French were defeated?"* *"Oh,"* he replied, *"the soldiers got careless about the watch, they were overconfident*

and pleasure-loving, and when, one dark night, they were off guard, the citadel was taken."

That is the story of many a disaster. We forget that the enemy of our souls never sleeps, and that when we are most off guard he is most on the watch. It was just at this point that Peter failed. You remember how self-confident he was, and the Master, who knew the unguarded place in Peter's character, used once again as He passed into the shadows of the Garden of Gethsemane the word He had so often used: "Watch!" "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." "Watch," that is your responsibility. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation"; that is the way you may avail yourself of your resources. But instead of watching Peter slept; and something happened which he believed never could under any circumstances have happened. It might happen to others but never to him; but the citadel was taken, and, with oaths and curses, Peter denied that he ever knew Jesus at all. Then the cock crew and Peter remembered his Lord's warning words and went out and wept bitterly. No wonder, when he writes his letter, he says: "Be sober, be vigilant!"

These words "Watch ye!" have been written in letters of fire on the signal-posts of life by the hand of God. "Watch"; "Watch unto prayer"; "Watch, for ye know not the day or the hour"; "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!" "Watch, for ye know not when the time is!"

Vigilance—which is watchfulness combined with alertness—is the price of everything good and great in earth and heaven. It seems as though there was no word so far-reaching as the word, "Watch." It was for his faithful vigilance that the sentinel at Pompeii is embalmed in poetry and recorded in his-

tory. On that fatal day on which Vesuvius, at whose feet the city stood, burst out into a fiery eruption that shook the earth, a sentinel kept watch by the gate which looked towards the burning mountain.

Amidst the dreadful disorder and panic which ensued, the sentinel was forgotten, and as Rome required her sentinels, happen what might, to hold their posts till released by the guard, or set at liberty by their officer, the Pompeian sentinel had to choose between death and dishonour. He chose death.

Slowly but surely the ashes rise on his manly form, now they reach his breast, and now covering his lips they choke his breathing. He was "faithful unto death," and after seventeen centuries they found his skeleton, standing erect in a marble niche, clad in its rusty armour, the helmet on his empty skull, and his bony fingers still closed upon his spear.

I have referred to the necessity of alertness. It is that state of attention to duty and to danger which we familiarly speak of as "wide awake"; a state in which we are keenly alive to every duty, and quick to detect the most subtle assaults of the enemy. Such is the vigilance required when an army is on the march or resting in camp. Advanced guards are thrown out. The picket line is established by day and by night. So vigilant must the sentries be, that becoming accustomed to the darkness, they can detect the movement of an advancing foe even in the darkest night.

I remember reading an incident when the United States soldiers were in conflict with the Indians. Night after night the sentry at a certain post was shot, and no one could explain how the tragedy happened. The report of a gun was heard, a sentry lay dead at his post, but no foe was ever seen. One night, with his senses all quickened by what had

happened to his comrade at that post, the sentry saw what seemed to be a bear moving towards the camp from the brushwood. The movements of the animal were so erratic that the sentry took aim and killed what he thought was a bear, but which proved to be an Indian disguised in a bear-skin.

The enemy will come upon you in all sorts of disguises. He comes sometimes, as Paul tells us, as an angel of light, and deceives even experienced soldiers. We are placed here to be trained and developed for larger and nobler service by exposure to the forces of evil. If we were so sheltered from evil that there would be no need for constant watchfulness, we should lose the moral benefit which a habit of constant watchfulness induces. Depend upon it in the high and holy service which awaits the true soldier of the Cross, we shall need all those faculties that are now being quickened and trained by our contact with danger, and our exposure to apparently hostile conditions of existence.

Our Lord's frequent use of the exhortation to watchfulness refers, in almost every case, to our attitude in view of His Second Coming. He has told us so much about this, and has given us so many warnings against carelessness in view of His return, that we shall do well to be found among those, who in these dark and tragic days, are constantly looking for His appearing. So delighted will He be to find His servants watching that He uses remarkable words to express that delight: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

It is the picture of a nobleman who has gone away to a marriage feast; the time of whose return is

uncertain. He has commanded his servants to watch, so that return when he may, morning, noon or night, he will find them ready to welcome him. One night, when all the world is sleeping, the vigilant watchers hear the sound of an approaching cavalcade. They joyfully exclaim, "It is he!" Flinging open the gates and doors, he enters, to find his faithful servants at their post, the table spread for refreshment, and a welcome from all. *Makarios*, says the Master, not only "Blessed," but "*Supremely blessed* are those servants," and he shows his delight at finding them so vigilant, that he makes them sit down at the feast which they have prepared for him, while he waits upon them.

Watching is never pleasant work. No soldier likes it. Men infinitely prefer the excitement and danger of the battlefield to long hours of unsleeping vigilance. But the work of the sentries has sometimes as much to do in deciding the history of a campaign as a victorious battle.

No general ever realized this more than Napoleon the Great. I have seen a picture which strikingly illustrates this. It was the Emperor's custom to steal out in the darkness, in disguise, to see whether the pickets were all at their post. One night he found a sentry fast asleep at a post of danger. There he lay on the ground, his rifle in his arms. Napoleon took the rifle, without awaking the sleeping soldier, and then took his place as sentry until the man awoke.

The picture represents the soldier awaking with the coming of the dawn. He is on one knee, shading his eyes, and looking at the martial figure standing close beside him. "My God," he cries in horror, "it's the Emperor!" and he knows that with such a witness to his faithlessness he can look forward to

nothing but the penalty of death for being found sleeping at his post.

“Watch ye!” lest when the Lord Jesus comes again you be found sleeping.

“Christian! seek not yet repose,
Cast thy dreams of ease away;
Thou art in the midst of foes:
Watch and pray.

“Principalities and powers,
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hours:
Watch and pray.

“Gird thy heavenly armour on,
Wear it ever night and day;
Ambushed lies the evil one:
Watch and pray.

“Hear the victors who o’ercame;
Still they mark each warrior’s way;
And with one sweet voice exclaim,
Watch and pray.

“Hear, above all, hear thy Lord,
Him thou lovest to obey;
Hide within thy heart His word,
Watch and pray.

“Watch, as if on that alone
Hung the issue of the day;
Pray that help may be sent down:
Watch and pray.”

XI

THE SOLDIER'S DRILL BOOK

NO. 2. "STAND FAST!"

AT the critical moment in the Battle of Waterloo, when everything depended on the steadiness of the soldiery, courier after courier kept dashing into the presence of the Duke of Wellington announcing that unless the troops at an important point were immediately relieved or withdrawn they must yield before the impetuous onsets of the French. By all the couriers the Iron Duke sent back the same spirit-stirring message, "Stand Firm!" Once an officer galloped up and replying to the Duke's command to "Stand Firm!" exclaimed: "But we shall all perish!" "Stand Firm!" repeated the iron-hearted chieftain. "You'll find us there!" rejoined the officer, as he put spurs to his charger and fiercely galloped away. The result proved the truth of the officer's forecast, for every soldier of that doomed brigade fell, fighting bravely at his post. They "Stood Firm," to the last man.

Take the exhortation "Stand Fast!" first, as being opposed to cowardice, to fainting, to a dishonourable and inglorious retreat. Having taken your place in the fighting-line you must stand fast. The militant position must be maintained to the very end. You may as well throw away the scabbard of your sword for you will never again need it. There is no dis-

charge in this war. You may be weak, but you must stand fast. You may argue, like the officer in the battle of Waterloo, "But I shall perish!" yet you must stand fast. You may be weary and tempted to faint in the hour of conflict, but you must resist the temptation, and stand fast. You may see others fall about you, but you must stand fast. Some may sell their swords, prove cowards and run for their lives, but you must stand fast. The position allotted to you may seem exceptionally perilous and critical, but you must stand fast. The day of victory may be long delayed, but you must stand fast.

When the Chinese soldiers returned after the conflict between China and Japan, it was found that many of them had wounds in their back. There was no need to ask them what they had done. Those wounds in the back told the sad story of cowardice and of dishonourable retreat. You will have noticed that in the Christian's armour there is nothing for the back.

Take the "Stand Fast!" as being opposed to all irregularity and disorder; all unwarranted license on the part of the soldier. "If any man strive for the mastery," says Paul in another place, "yet is he not crowned unless he strive lawfully." There are fixed rules for warfare and by them the soldier must abide. He is sometimes tempted to rebel against the rigid and unbending discipline to which he is subjected. But without discipline an army becomes an unmanageable horde, one part of which is as likely as not to turn its destructive energies against the other.

In those dark days through which Russia has recently passed nothing was more distressing to her friends than to read that her soldiers had become so lawless, and demoralized, and undisciplined, that

they were actually shooting their own officers. Nothing strikes a civilian's eye more quickly, as he watches a regiment of soldiers passing through a city, than the presence or absence of discipline. When he sees a lack of rhythm in the movements, with here and there a man who is in danger of almost falling out of the ranks, he knows that the rigid discipline, which is not merely the perfection of form, but which is also an essential condition of power, is to some extent lacking.

In his great sermon on "The Military Discipline," Horace Bushnell asks: "Does it then reduce the soldiers and all the subordinate commanders of an army to mere ciphers, when they are required to march, and wheel, and lift every foot, and set every muscle, by the word of authority; when even the music is commandment, and to feed and sleep, and not sleep are by requirement? Why, the service rightly maintained invigorates every manly quality; for they are in a great cause, moving with great emphasis, having thus great thoughts ranging in them and, it may be, great inspirations. Not many of them ever had as great before, or ever will have again."

When our soldiers return from their campaign, how often is it remarked of one and another, that his good-for-nothingness, the slouchiness, is somehow taken away, and that his very gait is manlier; as if he were a man squared up by discipline and command, and the new-felt possibility of being of some consequence to his country.

So it is in the Christian life. Our very restrictions are our enfranchisement. We attain our highest liberty by becoming the bond slaves of Jesus Christ. "If ye abide in my Word," He said, "then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth and

the truth shall make you free." Accept then His ideals; and submit to His Saviourship. Instead of discussing "Heaven's easy, artless, unincumbered plan" of salvation by faith, unhesitatingly submit to it. Do as the Israelites did, when Moses told them the conditions on which their emancipation could be obtained. It is said: "And the people bowed the head and worshipped. And the children of Israel went away and did so" (Exod. 12: 27-28). Having submitted to the Saviourship of Jesus Christ, submit next to His Sovereignty. Then instead of the old "I cannot do this," you will find that He so possesses and empowers the soul that you will exclaim, "I can do all things in Christ who strengtheneth me." This is what it means to "stand fast in the faith."

So the blind preacher-poet sings:

"Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conquer be.
I sink in life's alarms
When by myself I stand
Imprison me within Thine arms,
And strong shall be my hand."

Four times in that wonderful appeal to the Christian soldier in the sixth chapter of Ephesians Paul urges him to stand: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. "Stand"

. . . "withstand" . . . "stand" . . . "stand therefore" . . . (vers. 10-14).

Not against flesh and blood have you to wage war, but against a superhuman enemy. You are not fighting against a fallen world, but against a fallen heaven. Of those evil spirits there is a countless multitude.

"They throng the air, they darken heaven
And rule the lower world."

We have some idea of the armies of Europe, but we have a very faint conception of the legions of God's adversary and ours. A legion is sometimes associated with a single man (Mark 5:9), and a legion consisted of six thousand soldiers with its complement of cavalry. Under the direction of their rulers these fallen spirits ceaselessly strive for ascendancy over the hearts and reason of men. There are no human souls which are not more or less subject to their influence. You never enter your place of prayer, or stand before the altar of God, but Satan is there, in the person of his emissaries, to resist you.

Their greatest triumph consists in persuading men that they are on no ground of danger or warfare, but in a paradise of delights for the gratification of the senses and appetites. Most men prefer to believe in the reasonings of these evil spirits rather than in the Word of God. Consequently they abandon themselves to immediate pleasure. They lose the battle and go into the darkness, to discover, when it is too late, in what relation those stand to heaven whose time on earth was a frivolity, a loving of the garish day, a holiday instead of a conflict.

Your only hope is to put on the Divine armour. Jesus is the only man who ever prevailed in this war.

To meet this enemy in actual combat and to overcome him, was one of the grand ends of the Incarnation, therefore "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." If you put on Christ, you put on armour clothed in which the weakest and feeblest cannot fail, and without which the mightiest and shrewdest cannot succeed.

There is no finer illustration in history—excepting the appearance of Paul before Nero—of what it means to "stand fast in the faith," than Luther's appearance before the Diet of Worms on April 17, 1521. Many of Luther's friends tried to dissuade him from going but he said: "Were there as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses I would go in God's name."

The people crowded the windows and housetops as the monk went to the Hall of the Diet, some of them calling out to him in solemn words not to recant. Carlyle suggests that this was really the petition of the whole world lying in dark bondage of soul, and paralyzed by the Papal power. In an inarticulate voice they all said: "Free us; it rests with thee; desert us not!"

Five thousand people had crowded the ante-chamber and other approaches to the Hall. Every avenue, and every door were completely blocked up with the crowds, and it was only when the imperial soldiers had forced open a way for him that Luther could enter. As he entered the Inner Hall, where the crowd was scarcely less dense, an old general and valiant knight laid his hand on Luther's shoulder, and said to him in true military style: "Monk! Monk! thou hast before thee a march, and an affair such as myself and many a captain have not seen the like in the bloodiest of our battles; but if thy cause

is just, and thou art assured of it, advance in God's name:—God will not abandon thee."

Luther entered. There sat the world's pomp, pageantry and power. It was the most imposing and magnificent assembly that has ever gathered at any one time. There sat the young Emperor Charles the Fifth, whose dominion embraced two worlds, all the Princes of Germany, six electors of the Empire, eighty dukes, eight margraves, thirty prelates of various ranks, seven ambassadors, the deputies of five cities, with the Papal nuncios and others. All those were on one side.

On the other, standing up for God's Truth one solitary monk, the son of Hans Luther the poor miner. This very appearance there was a victory. The Pope had condemned him, excommunicated him, and given him over to eternal death, but now he has to do with an assembly of men, who, like himself, placed themselves above the Pope.

As he advanced in front of the throne on which the Emperor was seated, every eye was fixed upon him. Here is his portrait: he is of middle size—in the prime of life—emaciated by care and study—calm and benignant in aspect—with a clear and penetrating voice. The rustle and hum dies away into the most solemn stillness.

Two questions were addressed to Luther by the Archbishop's Chancellor: "Dost thou admit that these books were written by thee? Wilt thou retract these works and their contents, or dost thou persist in the things thou hast advanced?"

When, after long discussion, the Diet found that it could not by any means remove the Reformer from the ground which he had taken, the proceedings were wound up with the repetition of the question: "Will

you, or will you not retract?" To which question Luther gave the immortal answer:

"Unless I am convicted of error by the Holy Scriptures, I neither can nor dare retract anything; for my conscience is held captive by God's Word. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me Amen."

The Diet of Worms was over. The great and glorious day was ended. The victory in which we are sharers was won, and the voice that spoke to that august assembly speaks to you and to me and says: "Watch ye; Stand fast in the faith; Quit you like men; Be strong!"

XII

THE SOLDIER'S DRILL BOOK

NO. 3. "QUIT YOU LIKE MEN!"

THESE words, "Quit you like men," are a ringing challenge to Christian manliness. The word which expresses the challenge is only found in this place, and might be translated, "*Play the man!*" For our phrase of four words, Paul uses but a single word, *anēr*. The *primary* meaning of which is simply man as distinct from woman; its secondary meaning is man as a person of mature years in contrast with a child. For its third and supreme meaning, the word broadened and blossomed into the larger conception of man, as a being possessed of intelligence, wisdom, moral light and force; possessed moreover, of a spiritual nature, in contrast with creatures of an inferior order who are devoid of these endowments.

Long before Paul's day the word had been used, somewhat as he uses it, to spur and inspire men to great, worthy and difficult deeds. In Homer and Herodotus, for instance, the word comes up again and again, when some great chieftain at a moment of danger, and in the presence of some tremendous task, turns to his followers and exhorts them to "play the man!"

Paul charged the word, as he often does, with a far richer meaning, because his conception of the

spiritual range and possibilities of man's nature was far grander than theirs. The basis of his appeal is, however, the same as theirs.

The primary use of the word is a protest against effeminacy. If in any direction a man is expected to have more courage and strength than a woman, let him acquit himself like a man.

The secondary use of the word is a protest against childishness. If a grown man is expected to have more intelligence, wisdom, force, self-control or fortitude than a child; if, since becoming a man, he claims to have put away childish things, then let him "play the man."

But the word is charged, as we have seen, with a greater meaning. Its supreme and consummate signification is that men are to act as creatures having reason, conscience, power of choice and the measureless possibilities of an immortal life; and not like creatures of mere instinct, impulse and irresponsibility. Here the protest is against animalism or brutishness, which may be defined as existence unregulated by intelligent and conscientious self-direction.

Paul's conception of playing the man, is to acquit ourselves like beings who act above effeminacy, above childishness and above brutishness; to be under the control of Another, thus finding our true enfranchisement, and not to be the sport of whims and fancies; of frivolities and foolishness; of accidents and impulses; of emotions and passions.

A hundred years ago a young man from Peterborough, England, entered Christ College at Cambridge. His head was clear and his ability was undoubted, but he fell into bad company, and his precious time and University privileges were passing away in idleness. He had spent his evening in

frivolous company, eating, drinking and making merry.

At five the next morning he was awakened by one of his better companions, who was standing at his bedside. "Paley," he said, "*what a fool you are to waste your time in this way!* I could do nothing if I were to try, for I lack the ability. *You could do anything.* I have had no sleep with thinking about you. Now I have come to tell you that unless you renounce this frivolous, idle, prodigal life, I shall renounce your society."

This plainspoken admonition, coming from an unexpected quarter, was not lost. That very day the startled sluggard and prodigal came to himself. He formed a new plan of life. He put himself by a deliberate act of will under the Saviourship and Sovereignty of Jesus Christ. He rose every morning at five; he worked till nine at night. He kept his resolutions. His industry was unconquerable; his progress was unrivalled. When the examinations were held, at the top of the list, in the highest place of honour known as Senior Wrangler, stood the name of William Paley, whose great book on Christian Evidences is known to all students of Theology; as a work that has rendered the cause of Truth service which is simply invaluable.

1. MANLINESS IS CHIVALRY

Away back in the Middle Ages was a beautiful and radiant thing named Chivalry—partly real and partly ideal. The ideal part is just as precious to us as the real. One great purpose lay at the foundation of Chivalry. It was the cultivation of the finest and most stately type of manhood, that ever trod up and down the world.

The dream of chivalry was embodied by King Arthur and the knights who sat with him at the Round Table. Let King Arthur himself tell us what chivalry meant:

“I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God’s,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.”

Thus the oath of the Arthurian knighthood and manhood consisted of a loyalty, to Christ, to King, and to conscience. They were to be truthful in an age of falsehood; courteous in an age of coarseness; chaste in an age of unchastity; temperate in an age of intemperance.

Long before chivalry was talked about, those very truths lived in Paul’s soul and were incarnated in Paul’s life; and they live to-day in the life of every man who like the Apostle is indwelt by Jesus Christ. It matters not whether he wields the pen or the plough-handle; the sword or the sledge-hammer; it

matters not whether he point the rifle in defence of Freedom or steer the roadster in pursuit of pleasure; whether he sits at a round table or a square one; it is as true for him as it was for Sir Galahad, Sir Lancelot, Sir Tristram or King Arthur, that unchastity is dishonour to manliness; that it is a fatal detraction from it; that it is absolutely incompatible with it. A vicious, profane, intemperate, man—no matter how bulky his pocketbook—has no more claim to be called a manly man—that is a gentleman—than a vicious, immodest woman can claim to be a womanly woman—*that is a lady.*

2. MANLINESS IS COURAGE

We must remember that military courage is only one type of courage. It is a type the world greatly needs just now, and it is deserving of our admiration, but it is not the highest type. It is not by any means peculiar to the age in which we are living. It existed in the days of Greece and Rome, nor have we advanced an inch in military courage beyond the standards of the Old World. Physical courage leaped full-statured into the arena of battle in the morning of the world, and it will never be possible to go beyond the heroism reached by the soldiers of Greece and Rome, or by the savages who laughed at death and faced it without quailing for a single moment. Their physical courage can never be surpassed.

No man but a fool or a brute, loves war for its own sake. It is not for love of war that tens of thousands of men have responded to the call of their country. They are inspired by a sense of patriotism and duty, and when that spirit dies out of a land she is as surely doomed as Rome was in the days of her decadence.

The soldiers of the National Army are in some special sense, as the President says "the Soldiers of Freedom."

Never before has there been a war where the right to move about freely; to do one's lawful business without interruption; to protect our loved ones, our wives and children from the barbarity of lust and murder, has been so definitely presented to the American people as it is to-day.

"You must fight for the fire that toasts your feet, for the
roof that shelters your head,
For the herd that yields you its milk or meat, for the field
that gives you bread;
You must fight for bed, you must fight for board, for the
woman you love the best.
And, oh, you must fight with a tenfold will for the baby
at her breast.

"When a mad dog comes down your village street, with the
green foam in his jaws,
Do you greet him with Bibles and hymn-books, and lov-
ingly bid him pause?
When a rattlesnake rises amidst your path, alert with its
fiery sting,
Do you pet him, and pat him, and wish him well, and a
song of welcome sing?

"When a big-armed bully among the Powers says the folk
of a little land
Must sprawl in the dirt and confess to a crime that never
besmirched their hand,
Do you blame that people that rises up a pigmy ready to
fight,
A David aroused, with only a sling, defying Goliath's
might?

"When a vain War-Lord with a swollen head, inflamed with
a brute desire,
Through a little State that was lapped in peace comes
tramping with blood and fire
Despoiling the fields and looting the towns—do you blame
that blameless State
For rousing in Godlike righteous wrath and hitting with
righteous hate?

“And war is the great Arouser; it silences whimpering
tongues;
It toughens the muscles, it hardens the fist, and brings
fresh air to the lungs;
Tho’ it comes with torch and it strikes with steel, and
shortens life’s petty span,
Man’s life it exalts to heroic heights, so a man is twice
a man.”

The highest type of courage is that to which the Son of God is always calling us. *He calls men to war.* Some one has said: “He would have no hope of getting the young men of the world if He could not promise them war, because young men have in them the fighting instincts, and it is their sphere and calling to batter down the citadels of the enemy.”

He came not to send peace but a sword, but lest any one should think He meant a sword of steel He corrected Peter the first moment he drew his sword of steel. “Put up that sword!” said Jesus when Peter had cut off a man’s ear. “Put up that sword; I was calling you to a higher courage.” Peter found out a few hours later how different *moral* courage was from military courage, for he went down in the presence of a taunting servant girl. It is this moral courage we need to play the man.

3. MANLINESS IS ROBUSTNESS

If those who think the religion of Jesus Christ is necessarily expressed in sanctimonious looks and phrases they are making the greatest mistake imaginable. Because of the lack of sanity and robustness in many a life, the religion of Jesus is regarded as something having principally to do with women, and especially old women. A famous Baptist preacher in Liverpool, once said of a certain individual, whose religion was repellant rather than attractive: “It

might be true that he had put off the old man, but he had certainly put on the old woman.”

Many popular authors—even Charles Dickens is not free from this criticism—represent ministers of the Gospel as the very opposite of robust manly men. They are often represented as sleek, oily, sneaky, sanctimonious and hypocritical; anything and everything but specimens of a robust, attractive, Christian manhood.

Others again have grown accustomed to think of religion—and by religion I of course mean Christianity—as something associated with sickness and death-beds. To them religion is an experience that narrows and restricts; a kill-joy, a skeleton at the feast of life; a kind of incarnate “Don’t!” That is a miserable travesty of religion; a repelling and ghastly caricature. The religion I urge upon your acceptance does not mean pushing in the stops and shutting off all the music of life; but a drawing out of every stop; that all the music of life may swell forth in rich and full-voiced harmony. In a word, to be Christ’s man, and so to be able in the highest sense to play the man.

XIII

THE SOLDIER'S DRILL BOOK

No. 4. "BE STRONG!"

WHEN the Captain calls to His soldiers, in the hottest moments of the fight to "Be Strong!" what does He mean? Every command of His is conveyed to me in the form of a promise, and there must be somewhere within my reach such strength as will not only carry me victoriously through the fight, but as will enable me to be more than conqueror. What kind of strength is it?

It is not physical strength. There is no more remarkable illustration of the folly of relying on human strength than is found in Hebrew history. A conflict with Assyria was impending, and the infatuated Jews sought an alliance with Egypt, notwithstanding the previous failures of Egypt to give them effective assistance. The Assyrian cavalry was very numerous and very efficient. The Jews had no cavalry worth speaking of. They were forbidden to multiply horses lest they should depend on them rather than on God. They turned in their infatuation to the Egyptian horses and war-chariots, for that country was possessed of a chariot-force of great strength.

Now listen to Isaiah: "Woe unto them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses; and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in

horsemen because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, and Jehovah they do not seek." . . . "Now the Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit: and when the Lord shall stretch out His hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is helped shall fall and they shall all perish together" (Isa. 31: 1-3).

The eyes of the Judean statesmen were fastened upon brute force. Egyptian cavalry was to them the very nerve and sinew of war, and Egypt, who possessed them, a coveted ally. "On horses will we fly . . . on the swift will we ride," was the word of these clever diplomats, who were seeking at this time to accomplish the alliance at the very court of Pharaoh.

Isaiah says, "Now the Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit." In other words there is no help for you either in the men or in the horses. You are simply putting the physical against the physical, brute force against brute force; Egyptian cavalry against Assyrian cavalry, and it will all come to nothing. "The arm of flesh will fail you."

What is the Divine programme? "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (ch. 30: 15). It was not alliance they needed but reliance. Not a panicky rush to Egypt for help, but a returning to God in penitence for their national sins. An abandonment of the disgusting and distracting search for human aids, and a quiet confidence in God, as the outcome of an adjusted relationship to Him. In that direction alone is real strength, says Isaiah.

This disposition to lean on the arm of flesh instead of trusting in the interposition of God is not Jew-

ish but human; instead of being peculiar to any one age or dispensation, it is an abiding spiritual peril. Are there any signs of it in our midst to-day?

We are justly proud of our splendid navy, but were our warships ten times as numerous that would not make us strong. We may congratulate ourselves that hundreds of thousands of young men from every walk of life, with the fire of patriotism burning in their breast, have responded to their country's call; but were that number multiplied a hundred-fold that would not make us strong.

A nation's greatness does not consist in its size, nor in the multitude of its people, nor in the vastness of its wealth. It is easy to be blinded and intoxicated with an admiration of greatness of this kind, like races that hold not God in awe. Unless we persistently set our faces against that delusion we are as surely doomed as Babylon or Rome. No nation that imagined it could exist and flourish in the strength of its men, armaments and material resources has ever lasted in the history of the world, or ever can. That is written for our warning in letters of fire.

Think of a nation involved, through no choice of its own, in a cataclysm that has no parallel in the history of the world; that has already plunged millions of homes into the deepest mourning; that has robbed the earth of hundreds of thousands of her choicest sons; assembling in a great city forty thousand strong, *on the Sabbath day* to witness one of the World's Series of ball games!

When the manhood of a country has largely forgotten God; does not worship Him in spirit and in truth; is possessed of an insensate love of pleasure; and imagines the *summum bonum* to be the acquisition of wealth; the marks of degeneracy are already

upon her. It is a spiritual, a moral degeneracy; and such a degeneracy inevitably spells weakness.

“Is it degenerate to fall from wealth,
To live in straiter shores, on scantier fare,
To put on homespun, and to lodge
With bare simplicity, the hardy nurse of health?
Nay, these are accidents which never yet
Did hurt nobility, but one thing may
Brand on our brow the mark ‘degenerate,’
To lose the vision of the truly great
And lapse from effort on the starry way.”

“You have been clever and successful,” says Isaiah to the Hebrew diplomats, “but you have forgotten that God also is wise,” that He too has His policy, and, as Dr. Adam Smith puts it, “works in history with as much cleverness and persistence as you do.” After Moscow, Napoleon is reported to have exclaimed, “The Almighty is too strong for me.” God’s snowflakes were stronger than Napoleon’s battalions.

What then is it to be strong? Paul tells us in other places. It is to be “strong *in* the Lord and in the strength of His might.” This constantly recurring formula, “*in the Lord*,” indicates the relation to Christ in which alone the true strength can be experienced. It is the strength of His might that you need; and His strength, by faith, becomes yours.

Professor Drummond once put it like this: “The problem of the Christian life is to preserve the right attitude. To abide in Christ is to be in position, that is all. God creates, man utilizes. All the work of the world is merely taking advantage of energies already there. God gives the wind, the water and the heat. Man puts himself in the way of the wind; he fixes his water-wheel in the way of the river; he puts his piston in the way of the steam; and so holding him-

self in position before God's Spirit, all the energies of Omnipotence course within his soul."

Just as the steam engine genders the dynamic force which bolts and wheels communicate to the inert mass of machinery of the factory, so Christ is alone the source of spiritual strength which, through faith, is communicated to His people.

I have seen what are called "petrifying wells," into which people put pieces of wood and other things. The wood is not turned into stone but the well infiltrates into the wood mineral particles, which makes the wood as strong as stone. So my manhood, with all its impotence, may have filtered into it Divine strength which will brace me for all needful duty, enable me to stand my ground in the day of battle, and having fought to the end, to remain a victor on the field.

Paul says we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit *in the inner man*." The inner man! What do those words mean? Remember you have a dual nature. I will suppose that you have often tried to change the outward man, your conduct; your appearance in the eyes of other people; to rid yourself of some habit that has been growing with your growth and strengthening with your strength. But you have failed, because you have not gone deep enough. The inner man is what Peter calls "the hidden man of the heart." It is the soul, the unseen self as distinguished from the outward man, which the inner man animates and informs. It includes the thinking, the feeling, the resolving faculties. That inner man needs a life and a strength which is not human but Divine. It needs a strength that is not ethereal but real. It needs a might that will be diffused through our whole being and that will be available for our whole life.

It is in this inner self which the Spirit of God regenerates and in which He dwells. As one has said: "The point to mark is that the whole inward region which makes up the true man is the field upon which this Divine Spirit is to work. It is not a bit of your inward life that is to be hallowed. It is not any one aspect of it that is to be strengthened; but it is the whole intellect, affections, desires, tastes, powers of attention, conscience, imagination, memory, will. The whole inner man in all its corners is to be filled, and to come under the influence of this power, 'until there is no part dark, as when the bright shining of a candle giveth thee light.' Let the Divine Spirit come, with the master key in His hand, into all the dim chambers of your feeble nature."

He will come into your understanding, and strengthen your mentality, making you equal to loftier tasks of reason and intellect than you could face in your unaided powers; He will dwell in your affections causing them to love holy things. He will reinforce your feeble, vacillating will, enabling it to lay hold upon the good, and repel the evil; He will pour a great tide of strength into your whole being, spirit, soul and body; which shall cover all your weakness, whether it be physical, mental or spiritual.

Many times I have stood upon the seashore when the tide has been out. I have walked into the caves; I have examined the inlets and indentations in the rocky shore; I have peered into the little bays and basins, hollowed in the rock by the pounding of the boulders, but now empty and dry, excepting for the remains of some stranded shellfish and withered seaweed.

I have waited until the tide has rolled majestically in; filling every inlet and indentation; pouring over

and overflowing every bay and basin. I have had to climb out of the way, for the white-crested waves were flooding the caves and penetrating the clefts of the rock. The whole shore was completely submerged by the ever-rising sea of waters.

That is a picture of what the Spirit of God will do in your nature if you will only allow Him. He will fill every void. He will flood every part of your inner man—your understanding, your emotions and your will with tides of Divine energy. He will turn your inability into ability, your incapacity into capacity, your feebleness into strength, and He will do it now, if you will only ask Him, for this is His loved work.

Your safety lies in your conscious helplessness, for His strength is made perfect in your weakness. All your self-conceit and self-confidence have to be taken out of you, for it is only when you are weak in yourself that you can become strong in Him. When you know yourself to be weak you have taken the first step towards strength; and you continue strong by that humble and unceasing dependence, which we call faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Of your boasted wisdom spoiled,
Docile, helpless as a child;
Only seeing in His light,
Only walking in His might.”

XIV

GORDON'S WHITE HANDKERCHIEF

AT the funeral service of Charles George Gordon, the famous British general, who died under such tragic circumstances in Khartoum, the Bishop of Newcastle made the following beautiful and inspiring statement about this Christian soldier. There was, each morning, during his journey in the Soudan, one half-hour during which there lay outside General Gordon's tent a white handkerchief. The whole camp knew the full significance of that small token, and it was sacredly respected by every man, whatever his colour, creed or business. No foot dared to enter the tent so guarded. No message however pressing was carried in. Whatever the message was, whether of life or of death, it had to remain until that guardian signal was removed. Every one knew that Gordon was alone with God, and that as the servant prayed and communed, the Master heard and answered.

That white handkerchief was the secret of the saintly, fearless, unselfish life; and Gladstone summed up the character of General Gordon in this short sentence: "He was a man who lived in close communion with God."

He was absolutely fearless. He feared men so little because he feared God so much. A savage monarch once had Gordon in his clutches, and told him that he had the power to take his life. The monarch was amazed beyond words that the General showed

no kind of fear, and even invited his enemy to take his life, if he thought any advantage would accrue to him by so doing. He believed that a man is immortal till his work is done, and that "though a thousand fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand," the arrow of death will not be permitted to come nigh to him, so long as he hides in God, and makes the Most High his Refuge.

In one of the four great books of Chinese philosophy there is a striking definition of a man who "knowing neither sorrow nor fear, walks alone, all confident in his courage." "Such a man," says the sage, "although he may love life will love something better than life, and although he may hate death will hate something more than death." That description exactly fits this heroic Christian soldier.

How paltry to such a man, walking with God as Enoch did, or standing before Him as Elijah did, were the prizes of earth, the rewards and honours which loom so large in the estimate of many. He had a great number of medals, for which he cared nothing. There was one medal, however, which was given him by the Empress of China, in recognition of his splendid services to that country, for which he had a great liking. Upon this medal a special inscription was engraved which led the General to value it highly. But the medal suddenly disappeared; no one knew when or how. Years afterwards it was found out by a curious accident, that Gordon had erased the inscription, had sold the medal for \$50, and then had sent that sum anonymously for the relief of the sufferers from the cotton famine in Manchester.

There is an entry in his Journal which came to light after his death. "Never shall I forget *what I got* when I scored out the inscription on the gold

medal. How I have been repaid a million-fold. There is now not one thing I value in the world. Its honours are all perishable and useless."

"My dear," he says to his sister, "why do you keep caring for what the world says? Try, oh, try to be no longer a slave to it. You can have little idea of the comfort of freedom from it; it is bliss. Hoist your flag and abide by it. In an infinitely short space of time all secret things will be divulged. Roll your burdens on Him. He will make straight your mistakes. He will set you right with those with whom you have set yourself wrong. Here am I, a lump of clay; Thou art the Potter. Mould me as Thou in Thy wisdom wilt; never mind my cries. Cut off my life, so be it; prolong it, so be it."

Is some one reading this who is smarting from non-recognition? One, perchance, who sees others promoted, who in their judgment, are far less worthy from every point of view? Cease from all disappointment and fretfulness on this account, and put yourself as you read, into the loving, mighty hands of the great Potter, and tell Him there is but one thing you desire and are concerned about, and that is to be made a "vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use."

But some one is asking how can I become so acquainted with God as to be at rest? How can I be rid of this thirst for human praise, and this feeling of irritation and annoyance when others are preferred before me?

There is only one way by which men on earth come to know one another, that is by having communication one with another. It need not be by talking face to face, you may become intimate with one you have never seen. But communication of some sort there must be. Something there must be

passing between two friends which carries to each a living knowledge of what the other is, and thinks, and feels; otherwise there can be no acquaintance, no friendship. And this communication must be continual and not occasional; hearty and not lukewarm; sincere and not unreal; open and not characterized by concealment.

This is the only way we can attain to the knowledge of God, and we can attain to it by faith. God was as real to Gordon within the curtains of that tent, guarded by the white handkerchief, as if he saw Him face to face. The common name for this converse, intercourse, communication, when it is between man and God is *prayer*.

Prayer is the only way by which man can know God. When our spirit addresses itself to God, tells out its yearnings and longings to God, He who is a Spirit listens, and not only listens but answers; and to do this is to pray. "God's ear," said one of the Puritans, "is ever close to my lips; I have only to whisper and He will hear."

Listen to these golden words by another great teacher, taken from "My Life in Christ, or Moments of Spiritual Serenity and Contemplation," by Father John. "If God is indeed and in truth all that we have said, then how easy it is for Him to give us all things we need when we take His ordained way of faith and prayer to receive them! It is utterly unpardonable, it is absolutely suicidal in us if we still doubt, and halt, and come away from God with our hearts empty. Our Lord said it as plainly as even He could say it. Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth. Believe that you have received it and you shall have it. Not to believe, then, is blasphemy against God. It is making Jesus Christ a lying witness. Only feel truly and sin-

cerely your need of that for which you pray, and believe that it comes from God, and you will obtain *anything* and *everything*. For with God all things are possible. Whether you are sitting alone, or lying down, or walking abroad, or thinking, or writing, or working; whether you are well or ill, at home or out, on land or on sea, be continually assured that God hears the finest breathings and beating of your heart; and that He listens to hear and help you. Has He not said to you that He waits to be gracious to you? Do you deny that? Forget, deny, despair of anything and everything but that. *Remember that for Omnipotence nothing is difficult, nor for Love a trouble or a task.* All things, therefore, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall surely receive. He who doubts is severely punished for his doubt, for his heart is left of God hard, and cold, and dead in sin. On the other hand, all blessings; all life, and peace, and power, and joy come directly and immediately from God, and from God in answer to believing prayer."

Think, when you are tempted to live independently of God, of Gordon's white handkerchief. Without prayer you will be as weak as water in the presence of temptation; but by prayer you will become as bold as a lion, and "the young lion and the dragon you shall trample under your feet." Every moment of communion with God will be a moment of deeper rest of soul and of increased vigour.

In the old fable when Hercules fought with the giant he could not kill him. He flung him down with all his might, and he thought he had dashed him to pieces, but every time the giant got up he was stronger than before. "Surely," thought Hercules, "if I have destroyed the hydra and the lion I can kill this giant." But up sprang the giant every

time he was thrown, because, said the old fable, the earth was his mother, and every time he fell he touched his mother, and got new life from her.

So every time you cry to God, and touch the heart of your Omnipotent and loving Father, you will get new strength. In vain the devil tries to trip you and throw you. In vain he flings you down, and says in his rage: "I will crush him this time!" There is a secret suggestion by Gordon's white handkerchief which will completely baffle the enemy, and make you in all things more than conqueror.

"I need not leave the jostling world,
Or wait till daily tasks are o'er,
To fold my hands in secret prayer
Within the close-shut closet door.

"There is a viewless, cloistered room
As high as heaven, as fair as day,
Where, though no feet may join the throng,
My soul can enter in and pray.

"No human step approaching, breaks
The blissful silence of the place;
No shadow steals across the light
That falls from my Redeemer's face.

"One, hearkening, cannot even know
When I have crossed the threshold o'er;
For He alone who hears my prayer,
Has heard the shutting of the door."

XV

THE COMRADESHIP OF GREATHEART

I MET recently in my reading, a suggestion about one of the characters in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" which greatly interested me. Let me quote from that brilliant writer Harrington C. Lees of London. He says: "The point where Bunyan seems to me to have grown most in the second part is that he did not let his pilgrims go alone in a greater sense. In the first part, Christian, and Faithful, and Hopeful, though they walked step by step, still, in regard to their pilgrimage they went alone. They had a roll, which did guide them to a certain extent, but it did not prevent them from getting into Giant Despair's castle, or into the Slough of Despond.

"But in the second part you have Greatheart. If there is a way to be shown, Mr. Greatheart shows it; if there is a giant to be conquered, Mr. Greatheart conquers him; if there is guidance to be given, Mr. Greatheart gives it. Mr. Greatheart is the Comforter, the Holy Spirit."

Quite naturally I went to my "Pilgrim's Progress" and began looking at the second part with this thought in my mind; and I found to my delight that Mr. Harrington Lees had put a key in my hand which I had never before possessed.

Here is Bunyan describing a portion of the journey of Christiana and her boys: "So they went on a little further, and they thought that they felt

the ground begin to shake under them, as if some hollow place was there; they heard also a kind of hissing, as of Serpents, but nothing as yet appeared. . . . Thus they went on till they came to about the middle of the Valley, and then Christiana said, 'Methinks I see something yonder upon the road before us, a thing of such a shape as I have not seen.' . . . And now it was but a little way off. Then she said, 'It is nigh!'

" 'Let them that are most afraid keep close to me,' said Mr. Greatheart. So the *Fiend* came on, and the Conductor met it; but when it was just come to him, it vanished from all their sights. They went therefore on, as being a little refreshed; but they had not gone far, before Mercy, looking behind her, saw, as she thought, something most like a Lion, and it came a great padding pace after; and it had a hollow voice of roaring, and at every roar that it gave, it made all the Valley echo, and their hearts to ache, save the heart of him that was their Guide. So it came up, and Mr. Greatheart went behind, and put the pilgrims all before him. The Lion also came on apace, and Mr. Greatheart addressed himself to give battle. But when the Lion saw that it was determined that resistance should be made to him, he also drew back and came no further."

In the conflict with the Giant, a little farther on, it is Mr. Greatheart who does the fighting; and when the victory was won we read: "They, among them, erected a pillar, and fastened the Giant's head thereon, and wrote underneath in letters that passengers might read:

" 'He that did wear this head, was one
That pilgrims did misuse;
He stopt their way, he spared none,
But did them all abuse;

“‘Until that I *Greatheart* arose
The pilgrims’ Guide to be;
Until that I did him oppose,
That was their Enemy.’”

The perpetual presence, comradeship and championship of the Holy Spirit is for all ages. “He shall abide with you for ever,” Jesus said. This is the great secret of continuous victory, as Bunyan so clearly teaches. The Fiend, the Lion and the Giant, were all grappled with and conquered by Mr. Greatheart. Indeed the presence of Greatheart was enough to frighten both the Fiend and the Lion, before they came to close quarters with the pilgrims. Let him that readeth understand.

One of my favourite Old Testament texts is Isaiah 59:19, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” Never shall I forget an experience I had in Dayton, Ohio, when that city was partially destroyed two years ago by a flood of waters. How suddenly the catastrophe happened! Almost before we could remove our possessions to the upper part of the building in which we were staying, the lower part of the house was full of water, and the sound of breaking glass, and crashing window-frames told its story of the strength and volume of the waters. That flood swept before it the stables of the cattle and the cottages of the poor. It invaded every business store in the city. It spared not the mansions of the rich. What a picture of horror and desolation that fair city presented when I walked through it after the waters had subsided! Scores of dead horses lay in the roadway; costly automobiles stood abandoned in the midst of the main streets; for swift though they were, the flood was swifter. What had been a beautiful garden city a few days previ-

ously was now a desert, with *débris*, wreckage and ruin everywhere.

There are times in every life when the experience of Christian in the first part of Bunyan's wonderful Allegory is ours: "Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said, . . . prepare thyself to die; for I swear by my infernal Den, that thou shalt go no farther; here will I spill thy soul." Some who read these words are being thus challenged to-day.

Christian, unlike Christiana, had no Greatheart to fight for him. "The combat," we read, "lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent; for you must know that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must needs grow weaker and weaker. In this combat no man can imagine, unless he had seen and heard as I did," says Bunyan, "what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight; he spake like a Dragon; and on the other side, what sighs and groans burst from Christian's heart. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged Sword; then indeed he did smile, and look upward; but 'twas the dreadfullest sight that I ever saw.

"So when the Battle was over, Christian said, I will here give thanks to Him that hath delivered me out of the mouth of the Lion, to Him that did help me against Apollyon. And he did so, saying:

"Great Beelzebub, the Captain of this Fiend,
Designed my ruin; therefore to this end
He sent him harness'd out: and he with rage
That hellish was, did fiercely me engage:
But blessed *Michael* helped me, and I
By dint of sword did quickly make him fly.
Therefore to Him let me give lasting praise
And thank and bless His holy name always.'"

The help of Michael may be good, in these hours of awful conflict, but the Championship of Greatheart is infinitely better; and by contrasting these two experiences—that of Christian and that of Christiana—it is easy to see what an advance there is in Bunyan's teaching.

We have all read how King Canute had his regal chair carried down to the sea, when the tide was flowing in, to please his flattering courtiers. He commanded the waters to retreat, but they heeded not; the only retreating that was done was done by Canute and his quickly disillusioned courtiers.

But we have at our call One who will triumphantly lift up a standard against the oncoming forces of the enemy. If we are only in confederacy with the Holy Spirit, He will put Jesus, the Victor of Calvary, between us and the adversary; and baffled and beaten by the One who bruised His head on the Cross, the foe will vanish, as he did when engaged by Greatheart in the conflict we have referred to. That is a standard Satan cannot endure, even though in his haste to destroy us he comes on us like the rushing waters of a flood.

But how can I be assured of the abiding Presence, Comradeship and Championship of this Greatheart?

There are five propositions which I have often employed in seeking to lead people into the victorious life, with which I will conclude this chapter.

Close your eyes for a moment before you read them, and ask the Holy Spirit to interpret their meaning, and to enable you to take these attitudes step by step.

1. *What God claims I gladly yield.*

He claims all. At one of the Conferences between the Northern and Southern States, at the close of the War of the Sixties, the representatives of the South stated what cession of territory they were prepared to make, provided that the independence of the States not ceded to the Federal Government was assured. More and more attractive offers were made; the portions to be ceded were increased, and those to be retained in a state of independence were proportionately diminished. All these proposals were met by a steadfast refusal. At last President Lincoln placed his hand on the map so as to cover the whole of the Southern States, and in emphatic words delivered his ultimatum: "Gentlemen, this Government must have the whole."

It is exactly so in this matter of surrender to God. The Ransom He freely gave, in the Person of His Only Begotten Son, was for the redemption of our being in its totality from the thralldom of Satan. Our spirit, our soul and our body now belong to Him. They are bought with a price; and He lays His hand on the whole of our nature, and claims it in its entirety for Himself.

2. *What I yield God accepts.*

He has been waiting for this moment of absolute surrender for years. I can never sing

"My all is on the altar
I'm waiting for the fire:
Waiting, waiting, waiting,
I'm waiting for the fire."

I cannot sing it because it is not Scriptural. In every case, so far as I know, when the sacrifice was laid upon the altar the fire immediately fell upon it and consumed it. It is we who by our compro-

mises and reservations keep Him waiting. He never keeps us waiting, for when the yielding is complete, the acceptance is assured. In other words if you will bring the fuel, He will send the fire, which is His token of acceptance.

3. *What God accepts He cleanses.*

The *Holy Spirit* is the name of this heavenly Companion, Comrade and Champion. He does not ask us to make our heart worthy of His entrance; that would be salvation by works, and is impossible. He comes Himself, to cleanse us from all sin, by applying to our sin-stained nature all the virtues and values of the Atoning Blood. What the meaning of the word "cleanseth" was to Frances Ridley Havergal she has described: "One of the intensest moments of my life was when I saw the force of that word '*cleanseth*.' The utterly unexpected and altogether unimagined sense of its fulfilment to me, *on simply believing it in its fulness*, was just indescribable. I expected nothing like it short of heaven." . . .

Will you not look up *now*, and say in simple, childlike faith, and in deepest reverence: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth *me*, even *me*, from all sin." Then "according to your faith it will be unto you."

4. *What God cleanses He fills.*

Of course He does. The whole of the processes of Redemption are ordained with a view to our being indwelt by the Spirit of God, and our consequent recovery to the position forfeited by the Fall. Dr. A. J. Gordon used to reverse the familiar saying: "Man's extremity is God's opportunity"; and make it to read: "God's extremity is man's opportunity."

Yes, God is in extremity for Spirit-filled men and women, and His extremity is *your* opportunity. Was His extremity ever greater than it is to-day? I think not.

5. *What God fills He uses.*

God is a severe economist, and He gives the Spirit in His fulness, not for our selfish enjoyment, not for the exhilaration of our being, not that we may obtain a reputation for uncommon sanctity and power, but always for service or for suffering. Sometimes you may win a harvest of precious souls as Peter did, and sometimes you may get a shower of cruel stones as Stephen did. All that you are responsible for is to be in such unbroken fellowship with the Holy Spirit that He can constantly use you, and He holds you responsible, not for success, but for fidelity.

“Take me now, Lord Jesus, take me.
Fill my soul with power Divine;
Thy devoted servant make me,
Keep me, Saviour, ever Thine.”

XVI

SAINTS IN NERO'S HOUSEHOLD

WHAT an extraordinary salutation this is! "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household." It is found at the end of St. Paul's letter to the Philip-
pians, a letter from Rome, a letter from a prison.

"Cæsar's household"! Of all the unlikely places in the world to find saints that was the most unlikely. It is wonderful to see a snow-white lily spreading its radiant beauty, and scattering its delicious perfume above a noisome bed of mud! It is wonderful to find a spring of sweet water in the bitter waste? But it is far more wonderful to find saints in the household of Cæsar, and this Cæsar, be it remembered, was the infamous Emperor Nero.

The historian says: "The epoch which witnessed the early growth of Christianity was an epoch of which the horror and degradation have been rarely equalled, and perhaps never exceeded, in the annals of mankind. Abundant proofs of the abnormal wickedness which accompanied the decadence of ancient civilization are sown broadcast over the pages of its poets, satirists and historians. They are stamped upon its coinage, cut on its gems, and painted on its chamber-walls."

"On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell."

Rome had learnt from Greece the lesson of her voluptuous corruption only too well. The old war-like spirit of the Romans was dead. The spirit that once found delight in conquest on the plains of Gaul, and in the forests of Germany, was now satiated by gazing on criminals fighting for dear life with bears and tigers, or upon bands of gladiators who hacked each other to pieces on the sand, crimsoned with human blood.

Two phrases summed up the character of Roman civilization in the days when Paul witnessed for his Master, a prisoner of Nero, waiting his trial—*heartless cruelty and indescribable corruption.*

At the lowest extreme of the social scale were millions of slaves, without family, without religion and without possessions. They had no recognized rights, and they passed from a childhood of degradation to a manhood of hardship, and an old age of unpitied neglect. It is reckoned that in the Roman Empire there were no fewer than sixty millions of these miserable slaves, who could be put to death for any offence and at any moment.

Only a little above the slaves were the lower classes, forming the vast majority of the free-born inhabitants of the Empire. They were largely beggars and idlers. They despised a life of honest industry, asking only for bread and the games of the Circus. Their life was largely made up of squalor, misery and vice. They supported any government, however despotic, if their needs were only supplied.

The contrast, always to be found in a period of national decadence, of selfish luxury existing side by side with abject poverty, was startlingly exhibited in Rome. A whole population trembled lest they should be starved by the delay of an Alexandrian

corn-ship, while the upper classes squandered a fortune on a single banquet, feasting on the brains of peacocks and the tongues of nightingales. Vitellius set on the table, at one banquet, two thousand fish and seven thousand birds, and in eight months, this Roman spent in feasts a sum that would now amount to many millions of dollars.

At the head of this whole system, now so putrid that it was tottering to its fall, was an emperor who, in the terrible language of Gibbon the historian, was at once "a priest, an atheist and a god." Of all the damning iniquities against which Paul had often to remind his heathen converts, and against which the wrath of God ever burns, there was scarcely one of which Nero was not guilty. He was "a wholesale robber, a pitiless despot, an intriguer, a poisoner, a murderer, a matricide, a liar, a coward, a drunkard, a glutton, incestuous; so unutterably depraved that even the Pagans spoke of him as 'a mixture of blood and mud.'

"He had usurped a throne; he had poisoned the noble boy who was its legitimate heir; he had married that boy's sister, only to break her heart by his brutality, and then order her assassination; he planned the murder of his own mother; he treacherously sacrificed the one great general whose victories gave any lustre to his reign; he had ordered the death of the brave soldier, and the brilliant philosopher who had striven in vain to guide his wayward heart; he had killed by a brutal kick the beautiful woman whom he had torn from her own husband to be his second wife; he had reduced his capital to ashes, and buffooned and fiddled and sung with his cracked voice in public theatres, regardless of the misery and starvation of thousands of his ruined subjects; he had charged the incendiarism

upon the innocent Christians and had tortured them to death by hundreds in hideous martyrdom; he had done his best to render infamous his rank, his country, his ancestors, the name of Roman—nay, the very name of man.”

This monster of corruption and cruelty was not thirty years of age when he was stained through and through with every possible crime, and steeped to the lips in every nameless degradation. His name is the synonym of everything that is impure, cruel and despicable. Probably no man has ever lived who has crowded into fourteen years of life so black a catalogue of iniquities as Nero.

At the very time when he was filling the cup of his iniquities to the full, there lay in one of his prisons a prisoner named Paul, the greatest saint, the greatest theologian, and the greatest missionary the world has ever seen. What a contrast! This letter of Paul's to the Philippians, written in that prison, with torture and death in view, is like a song in the night. As one has said: “It is a kind of prolonged echo of that midnight prayer and praise which marked Paul's first experience in the city of Philippi. The man who sang and prayed in that inner prison at Philippi is the man who in the Epistle sings, ‘Rejoice in the Lord, alway! and again I say Rejoice!’ ”

I am writing about these saints in Nero's household because I know some who read these words will have begun to think that it is exceedingly hard, if not absolutely impossible, to be loyal to Jesus Christ in a barracks, surrounded by scores of comrades, many of whom, possibly, have no sympathy whatever with a profession of Christianity, and who regard the followers of Jesus as weak-minded mollycoddles, and sissies.

If you are tempted because of this to lower your colours, and to speak of your relationship to Jesus Christ and His people in whispered tones, or with bated breath, remember, I entreat you, the saints in Nero's household, and let their heroism put you to shame.

The heads of departments in the royal household copied the vices of their sovereign and were almost as vile as he. Nero's court must have been a hell upon earth, and it should be remembered that the saints who shone for their Master in that hotbed of vice were not those who had been trained up from infancy in the nurture of the Lord. They were, for the most part, men and women who had grown up amidst the corruptions of paganism, and had been snatched as brands from the burning in adult life. Now in the midst of a contagion which I have only partially and imperfectly described, they were kept in loyalty to Christ by the power of God. If they could be kept under those conditions, cannot you?

There has been discovered in the catacombs of Rome an enamel which professes to represent Christ on the Cross. It has the figure of a man upon a Cross, but the head is the head of an ass. At the foot of the Cross, kneeling in adoration, is a Christian, and underneath a Latin inscription which means: "The Christian worshipping his God." That shows what these Romans thought of Christianity.

As the religion of Jesus spread, and as His followers multiplied, this scorn and contempt deepened into hate. Nero was deified, and, at certain religious festivals, incense was offered to him or to his image as to a god. The Christians of course refused to do anything of the sort. To them it was the veriest blasphemy, and a deadly denial of their Lord. Their refusal was at once construed into disloyalty to

Nero and to Rome. The Christians were then denounced as traitors and enemies of Rome. Spies arose in every street, almost in every house, to betray all who were suspected of Christianity. They were arrested, dragged before a tribunal, and commanded to prove their loyalty by offering incense to Nero. When they refused, they were immediately condemned, many of them to unheard-of tortures. They were dragged to the great amphitheatre, and in sight of twenty thousand spectators, famished dogs tore to pieces some of the best and purest of men and women, hideously disguised in the skins of bears and wolves.

In the tenth year of Nero's reign, A.D. 64, Rome, the most beautiful city in the world, was well-nigh destroyed by a fire that raged for six days and seven nights. Of its fourteen districts four alone escaped, some were completely laid in ashes. The evidence against Nero, as the instigator of this catastrophe, is far too unanimous to be set aside.

Feeling that he had gone too far, and knowing that when the people in the streets cursed those who had set fire to the city they meant to curse him, he endeavoured to fix the crime of destroying the capital upon the Christians, the most innocent and faithful of his subjects, the only men and women in his Empire who ever prayed for him.

Popular fury then rose to a white heat, and the cry was heard on every side: "The Christians to the lions!" But something infinitely more diabolical than death by lions in the Coliseum was suggested. A huge multitude of Christians were convicted of being the disciples of Jesus Christ, on their own evidence; and in the gardens of Nero the ghastliest scene that was ever witnessed took place. Along the paths of those gardens, on the autumn night, were

human torches. The clothing of the Christians was actually saturated with pitch and then set on fire, while Nero and his courtiers, dressed as charioteers, amused the cruel mob with chariot races, and drove in and out among them. Could devilish ingenuity invent anything more ghastly than that?

Now let us recall Paul's words: "All the saints salute you, *chiefly* they that are of Cæsar's household." Notice the word "*chiefly*." The chief salutation came from the most unlikely place. *You have* helpful surroundings, these Christians had *none*. Bad as New York, Chicago and London may be, they are heaven compared to Rome in the days of which we are thinking. *Here* there is some strong public opinion ranged against vice and immorality, in Rome there was *none*. Yet, like the white lily that springs from the muddy ooze of the river, there were those who walked with unsullied garments amid all the corruptions of a community steeped in the foulest vices. And they salute you, who complain that it is hard to live the Christian life in the camp, on board the ship, or at the front, where duty finds you. What would the saints in Nero's household think of the difficulties of which you are tempted to make so much?

There were four hundred and fifty heathen temples in Rome, but there was not one Christian place of worship. The Christians met in small groups in each other's houses. They came to the meeting in the darkness and by back streets lest they should arouse suspicion and be discovered. The latest to enter the little gathering would instinctively look around to see who was present and who was absent, for at every meeting some were missing.

Think of those gaps, week after week, in that little circle of saints! Where is Rufus, that radiant-faced

youth, who told us last week so exultingly of his newly-found joy? Where is that gentle maiden, Tryphena, whose testimony to the Saviour's power to keep her amid the fiercest temptations, brought tears to the eyes of all who listened? Where is that big soldier, Amphas, who told that as he listened to the prayers of that wonderful prisoner to whom he was chained, Paulus by name, he realized that he was a sinner, and was then led to the sinner's Saviour? Where is that old man, Hermas, whose tremulous voice was always heard in praise and prayer and testimony? Where indeed were they?

Some were flung to the lions, while those thousands in the Coliseum looked on, and gloated over their sufferings. "Others were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." And those noble souls, faithful in the teeth of the bitterest persecution, salute *you*, and challenge *you* to a like devotion to the Saviour in the barracks, in the camp, and on the field of battle. Again I repeat, if they could follow Christ in their day, you can in yours.

Do you covet an opportunity to show your bravery and courage? Here it is. On one of the early Christian monuments in Rome there is an epitaph of a young military officer, of whom it is written, he "lived long enough when he had shed his blood for Christ."

Persecution is Satan's own testimony that you are a genuine Christian. It is the world's acknowledgment that you are what you profess to be. And the fact that you are persecuted for righteousness' sake only proves that you are following in the foot-

steps of the saints and heroes who have gone before,
and that you are worthy of your Christian lineage.
“The saints of Nero’s household salute you!”

“For all the saints who from their labours rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed.
Thy name, O Jesu, be for ever blest.

Alleluia!

“Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight;
Thou in the darkness drear their one true light.

Alleluia!

“O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win, with them, the victor’s crown of gold.

Alleluia!

“O blest communion! fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.

Alleluia!

“The golden evening brightens in the west,
Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest,
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest.

Alleluia!

“But lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day!
The saints triumphant rise in bright array;
The King of glory passes on His way.

Alleluia!

“From earth’s wide bounds, from ocean’s farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—

Alleluia! ”



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